

Marygrove

EX LIBRIS



C22

A BOOK OF DRAMAS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF NINETEEN PLAYS

COMPILED BY

BRUCE CARPENTER, M. A.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
WASHINGTON SQUARE COLLEGE, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

NEW YORK
PRENTICE-HALL, INC.

1929

COPYRIGHT, 1929, BY
PRENTICE-HALL, INC.

All rights reserved

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEDICATED TO MY FATHER

PREFACE

This anthology is intended as an accompanying volume to my textbook, *The Way of the Drama*. It contains the same divisions as *The Way of the Drama*, its contents being selected to illustrate the various "forms" and "moods" of the companion book. Since the material of nearly all other drama anthologies is classified according to periods or national and geographical sections, I felt that a volume arranged by genres and schools should make *The Way of the Drama* of more practical value.¹

The number of plays in each division depends upon the importance of that division, and the selections are made from drama eras when the kinds of plays emphasized were most prominent. For example: The division devoted to *tragedy* contains three plays from the Greek (one by each of the great Attic dramatists), one play from the French neo-classical period, and one modern play based on standard models. Minor divisions, like that of melodrama, contain only one play each, generally from modern sources. The proportion of selections in the book as a whole inclines more toward the new drama than the old. The anthology may be used apart from *The Way of the Drama* as a volume of generally representative plays.

¹A more extensive list of plays may be found in a seven volume edition entitled *World Drama Series*, by Professor Robert Metcalf Smith, published by Prentice-Hall Inc., New York.

A short biographical sketch of each author, listing his principal works, will be found in the back of this book. No comments are made on the plays themselves or the periods in which they were written, since each play and each period is discussed individually in *The Way of the Drama*. Also, no bibliography is given, for this, too, is to be found in the companion volume.

A Book of Dramas is intended for general reading and drama appreciation and not for minute text study; consequently, no notes have been included. This has made possible the reprinting of a greater number of plays in comfortably readable type.

In the case of foreign plays the best translations obtainable have been utilized. A few cuts have been made in Hugo's *Hernani*, partly because of the unusual length of the play, and partly because the material cut has nothing to do with the action or romantic beauty and refers to matters that would not interest or be understood by modern readers. In the case of plays in English, original versions (with two exceptions) have been faithfully adhered to. The exceptions are *Love for Love* and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. *Love for Love* has been cut in accordance with recent productions of the piece.² Also, since certain portions were found too highly seasoned even for Restoration palates, I have made a few expurgations to comply with what I hope is good taste. In respect to *The Cricket on the Hearth* my cuts have been more directly concerned with the adaptation than with the original story. What in Dickens's tale reads as sentiment, often in the more concrete form of the play becomes sentimentality. Our grandfathers

² At the very first performance Congreve himself had to delete whole passages because of the excessive length of the play.

avored this sort of thing more than we do, and I did not wish an otherwise charming piece of work to be branded because it contained passages too "soft" for modern audiences to take seriously. I do not think that in any of the plays just mentioned I have marred the original spirit. In all cases the cuts have been indicated in the conventional manner.

Lists of additional plays in the various genres will be found in the bibliography of *The Way of the Drama*.

B. C.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Preface	V
Tragedy	
AGAMEMNON <i>Aeschylus</i>	1
(Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray)	
OEDIPUS, KING OF THEBES <i>Sophocles</i>	69
(Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray)	
THE TROJAN WOMEN <i>Euripides</i>	143
(Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray)	
PHAEDRA <i>Racine</i>	203
(Translated by Robert Bruce Boswell)	
RIDERS TO THE SEA <i>John M. Synge</i>	255
Comedy	
THE MISANTHROPE <i>Molière</i>	269
LOVE FOR LOVE <i>William Congreve</i>	323
THE SECOND MAN <i>S. N. Behrman</i>	401
Farce	
THE FARCE OF THE WORTHY MASTER PIERRE PATE- LIN <i>Unknown</i>	479
(Translated and Adapted by Moritz Jagendorf)	
THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST ... <i>Oscar Wilde</i>	507
Melodrama	
THE GREEN GODDESS <i>William Archer</i>	575
Romanticism	
HERNANI <i>Victor Hugo</i>	655
(Translated by Mrs. Newton Crosland)	

	PAGE
A MINUET	<i>Louis N. Parker</i> 749

Realism

HEDDA GABLER	<i>Henrik Ibsen</i> 763
THE CHERRY ORCHARD	<i>Anton Tchekhoff</i> 855
(Translated by Jennie Covan)	

Sentimentalism

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH	<i>Charles Dickens</i> 913
(Adapted by Albert Smith)	

Naturalism

MISS JULIA	<i>August Strindberg</i> 947
(Translated by Edwin Bjorkman)	

Symbolism

THE INTRUDER	<i>Maurice Maeterlinck</i> 993
--------------------	--------------------------------

Expressionism

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK	<i>Kaufman and Connelly</i> 1013
---------------------------	----------------------------------

Biographical Notes	1103
--------------------------	------

1
AGAMEMNON

(458 B.C.)

BY

AESCHYLUS

Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray

Copyright by Oxford University Press,
American Branch,
and reprinted by special permission
of the Translator and the Publishers.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

AGAMEMNON, son of Atreus and King of Argos and Mycenae;
*Commander-in-Chief of the Greek armies in the War
against Troy.*

CLYTEMNESTRA, daughter of Tyndareus, sister of Helen; wife
to Agamemnon.

AIGISTHOS, son of Thyestes, cousin and blood-enemy to Agamemnon, lover to Clytemnestra.

CASSANDRA, daughter of Priam, King of Troy, a prophetess;
now slave to Agamemnon.

A WATCHMAN.

A HERALD.

CHORUS of Argive Elders, faithful to AGAMEMNON.

CHARACTERS MENTIONED IN THE PLAY

MENELAUS, brother to Agamemnon, husband of Helen, and
King of Sparta. The two sons of Atreus are called the
Atreidae.

HELEN, most beautiful of women; daughter of Tyndareus,
wife to MENELAUS; beloved and carried off by Paris.

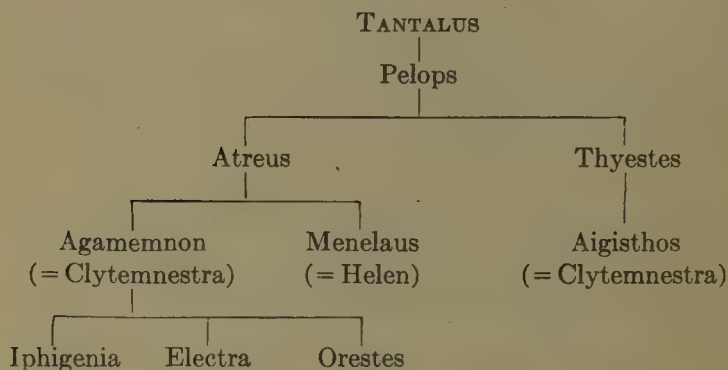
PARIS, son of Priam, King of Troy, lover of Helen. Also
called ALEXANDER.

PRIAM, the aged King of Troy.

The Greeks are also referred to as Achaians, Argives, Danaans; Troy is also called Ilion.

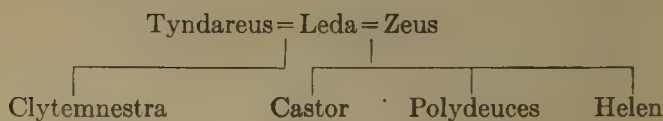
THE chief characters in the play belong to one family, as is shown by the two genealogies:—

I.



(Also, a sister of Agamemnon, name variously given, married Strophios, and was the mother of Pylades.)

II.



THE AGAMEMNON

The Scene represents a space in front of the Palace of Agamemnon in Argos, with an Altar of Zeus in the centre and many other altars at the sides. On a high terrace of the roof stands a WATCHMAN. It is night.

WATCHMAN.

THIS waste of year-long vigil I have prayed
God for some respite, watching elbow-stayed,
As sleuthhounds watch, above the Atreidae's hall,
Till well I know yon midnight festival
Of swarming stars, and them that lonely go,
Bearers to man of summer and of snow,
Great lords and shining, throned in heavenly fire.

And still I await the sign, the beacon pyre
That bears Troy's capture on a voice of flame
Shouting o'erseas. So surely to her aim
Cleaveth a woman's heart, man-passionèd!
And when I turn me to my bed—my bed
Dew-drenched and dark and stumbling, to which near
Cometh no dream nor sleep, but alway Fear
Breathes round it, warning, lest an eye once fain
To close may close too well to wake again;
Think I perchance to sing or troll a tune
For medicine against sleep, the music soon
Changes to sighing for the tale untold
Of this house, not well mastered as of old.

Howbeit, may God yet send us rest, and light
The flame of good news flashed across the night.

[*He is silent, watching. Suddenly at a distance in the night there is a glimmer of fire, increasing presently to a blaze.*]

Ha!

O kindler of the dark, O daylight birth
Of dawn and dancing upon Argive earth
For this great end! All hail!—What ho, within!
What ho! Bear word to Agamemnon's queen
To rise, like dawn, and lift in answer strong
To this glad lamp her women's triumph-song,
If verily, verily, Ilion's citadel
Is fallen, as yon beacons flaming tell.

And I myself will tread the dance before
All others; for my master's dice I score
Good, and mine own to-night three sixes plain.

[*Lights begin to show in the Palace.*]

Oh, good or ill, my hand shall clasp again
My dear lord's hand, returning! Beyond that
I speak not. A great ox hath laid his weight
Across my tongue. But these stone walls know well,
If stones had speech, what tale were theirs to tell.
For me, to him that knoweth I can yet
Speak; if another questions I forget.

[*Exit into the Palace. The women's "Ololûgê," or triumph-cry, is heard within and then repeated again and again further off in the City. Handmaids and Attendants come from the Palace, bearing torches, with which they kindle incense on the altars. Among them comes CLYTEMNESTRA, who throws herself on her knees at the central Altar in an agony of prayer.*]

[*Presently from the further side of the open space appear the CHORUS of ELDERS and move gradually into position in front of the Palace. The day begins to dawn.*]

CHORUS.

Ten years since Ilion's righteous foes,
The Atreidae strong,
Menelaüs and eke Agamemnon arose,
Two thrones, two sceptres, yokèd of God;
And a thousand galleys of Argos trod

The seas for the righting of wrong;
And wrath of battle about them cried,
As vultures cry,
Whose nest is plundered, and up they fly
In anguish lonely, eddying wide,
Great wings like oars in the waste of sky,
Their task gone from them, no more to keep
Watch o'er the vulture babes asleep.
But One there is who heareth on high
Some Pan or Zeus, some lost Apollo—
That keen bird-throated suffering cry
Of the stranger wronged in God's own sky;
And sendeth down, for the law transgressed,
The Wrath of the Feet that follow.

So Zeus the Watcher of Friend and Friend,
Zeus who Prevaileth, in after quest
For One Belovèd by Many Men
On Paris sent the Atreidae twain;
Yea, sent him dances before the end
For his bridal cheer,
Wrestlings heavy and limbs forespent
For Greek and Trojan, the knee earth-bent,
The bloody dust and the broken spear.
He knoweth, that which is here is here,
And that which Shall Be followeth near;
He seeketh God with a great desire,
He heaps his gifts, he essays his pyre
With torch below and with oil above,
With tears, but never the wrath shall move
Of the Altar cold that rejects his fire.

We saw the Avengers go that day,
And they left us here; for our flesh is old
And serveth not; and these staves uphold
A strength like the strength of a child at play.
For the sap that springs in the young man's hand
And the valour of age, they have left the land.
And the passing old, while the dead leaf blows

And the old staff gropeth his three-foot way,
Weak as a babe and alone he goes,
A dream left wandering in the day.

[*Coming near the Central Altar they see CLYTEMNESTRA, who is still rapt in prayer.*]

But thou, O daughter of Tyndareus,
Queen Clytemnestra, what need? What news?
What tale or tidings hath stirred thy mood
To send forth word upon all our ways
For incensed worship? Of every god
That guards the city, the deep, the high,
Gods of the mart, gods of the sky,
The altars blaze.

One here, one there,
To the skyey night the firebrands flare,
Drunk with the soft and guileless spell
Of balm of kings from the inmost cell.
Tell, O Queen, and reject us not,
All that can or that may be told,
And healer be to this aching thought,
Which one time hovereth, evil-cold,
And then from the fires thou kindlest
Will Hope be kindled, and hungry Care
Fall back for a little while, nor tear
The heart that beateth below my breast.

[*CLYTEMNESTRA rises silently, as though unconscious of their presence, and goes into the House. The CHORUS take position and begin their first Stasimon, or Standing-song.*]

CHORUS.

(*The Sign is seen on the way; Eagles tearing a hare with young.*)

It is ours to tell of the Sign of the War-way given,
To men more strong,
(For a life that is kin unto ours yet breaths from heaven

A spell, a Strength of Song:)

How the twin-throned Might of Achaia, one Crown divided
 Above all Greeks that are,
 With avenging hand and spear upon Troy was guided
 By the Bird of War.

'Twas a King among birds to each of the Kings of the Sea,
 One Eagle black, one black but of fire-white tail,
 By the House, on the Spear-hand, in station that all might see;
 And they tore a hare, and the life in her womb that grew,
 Yea, the life unliv'd and the races unrun they slew.

Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

(How Calchas read the sign; his Vision of the Future.)

And the War-seer wise, as he looked on the Atreïd Yoke
 Twain-tempered, knew
 Those fierce hare-renders the lords of his host; and spoke,
 Reading the omen true.

"At the last, the last, this Hunt hunteth Ilion down,
 Yea, and before the wall

Violent division the fulness of land and town
 Shall waste withal;

If only God's eye gloom not against our gates,
 And the great War-curb of Troy, fore-smitten, fail.

For Pity lives, and those wingèd Hounds she hates,
 Which tore in the Trembler's body the unborn beast.
 And Artemis abhorreth the eagles' feast."

Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

*(He prays to Artemis to grant the fulfilment of the Sign, but,
 as his vision increases, he is afraid and calls on Paian, the
 Healer, to hold her back.)*

"Thou beautiful One, thou tender lover
 Of the dewy breath of the Lion's child;
 Thou the delight, through den and cover,

Of the young life at the breast of the wild,
 Yet, oh, fulfill, fulfill! The sign of the Eagles' Kill!
 Be the vision accepted, albeit horrible. . . .
 But I-ê, I-ê! Stay her, O Paian, stay!

For lo, upon other evil her heart she setteth,

Long wastes of wind, held ship and unventured sea,
On, on, till another Shedding of Blood be wrought:
They kill but feast not; they pray not; the law is broken;
Strife in the flesh, and the bride she obeyeth not,
And beyond, beyond, there abideth in wrath reawoken—
It plotteth, it haunteth the house, yea, it never forgetteth—

Wrath for a child to be."

So Calchas, reading the wayside eagles' sign,

Spake to the Kings, blessings and words of bale;

And like his song be thine,

Sorrow, sing sorrow: but good prevail, prevail!

*(Such religion belongs to old and barbarous gods, and brings
no peace. I turn to Zeus, who has shown man how to
Learn by Suffering.)*

Zeus! Zeus, whate'er He be,

If this name He love to hear

This He shall be called of me.

Searching earth and sea and air

Refuge nowhere can I find

Save Him only, if my mind

Will cast off before it die

The burden of this vanity.

One there was who reigned of old,

Big with wrath to brave and blast,

Lo, his name is no more told!

And who followed met at last

His Third-thrower, and is gone.

Only they whose hearts have known

Zeus, the Conqueror and the Friend,

They shall win their vision's end;

Zeus the Guide, who made man turn

Thought-ward, Zeus, who did ordain

Man by Suffering shall Learn.

So the heart of him, again

Aching with remembered pain,

Bleeds and sleepeth not, until
 Wisdom comes against his will.
 'Tis the gift of One by strife
 Lifted to the throne of life.

(AGAMEMNON accepted the sign. Then came long delays and storm while the fleet lay at Aulis.)

So that day the Elder Lord,
 Marshal of the Achaian ships,
 Strove not with the prophet's word,
 Bowed him to his fate's eclipse,
 When with empty jars and lips
 Parched and seas impassable
 Fate on that Greek army fell,
 Fronting Chalcis as it lay,
 By Aulis in the swirling bay.

(Till at last Calchas answered that Artemis was wroth and demanded the death of AGAMEMNON's daughter. The King's doubt and grief.)

And winds, winds blew from Strymon River,
 Unharboured, starving, winds of waste endeavour,
 Man-blinding, pitiless to cord and bulwark,
 And the waste of days was made long, more long,
 Till the flower of Argos was aghast and withered;
 Then through the storm rose the War-seer's song,
 And told of medicine that should tame the tempest,
 But bow the Princes to a direr wrong.
 Then "Artemis" he whispered, he named the name;
 And the brother Kings they shook in the hearts of them,
 And smote on the earth their staves, and the tears came.
 But the King, the elder, hath found voice and spoken:
 "A heavy doom, sure, if God's will were broken;
 But to slay mine own child, who my house delighteth,
 Is that not heavy? That her blood should flow
 On her father's hand, hard beside an altar?
 My path is sorrow wheresoe'er I go.

Shall Agamemnon fail his ships and people,
 And the hosts of Hellas melt as melts the snow?
 They cry, they thirst, for a death that shall break the spell,
 For a Virgin's blood: 'tis a rite of old, men tell.
 And they burn with longing.—O God may the end be well!"

(But ambition drove him, till he consented to the sin of slaying his daughter, Iphigenia, as a sacrifice.)

To the yoke of Must-Be he bowed him slowly,
 And a strange wind within his bosom tossed,
 A wind of dark thought, unclean, unholy;
 And he rose up, daring to the uttermost.
 For men are boldened by a Blindness, straying
 Toward base desire, which brings grief hereafter,
 Yea, and itself is grief;
 So this man hardened to his own child's slaying,
 As help to avenge him for a woman's laughter
 And bring his ships relief!

Her "Father, Father," her sad cry that lingered,
 Her virgin heart's breath they held all as naught,
 Those bronze-clad witnesses and battle-hungered;
 And there they prayed, and when the prayer was wrought
 He charged the young men to uplift and bind her,
 As ye lift a wild kid, high above the altar,
 Fierce-huddling forward, fallen, clinging sore
 To the robe that wrapt her; yea, he bids them hinder
 The sweet mouth's utterance, the cries that falter,
 —His curse for evermore!—

With violence and a curb's voiceless wrath.

Her stole of saffron then to the ground she threw,
 And her eye with an arrow of pity found its path
 To each man's heart that slew:
 A face in a picture, striving amazedly;
 The little maid who danced at her father's board,
 The innocent voice man's love came never nigh,
 Who joined to his her little paeon-cry
 When the third cup was poured. . . .

What came thereafter I saw not neither tell.

But the craft of Calchas failed not.—'Tis written, He
Who Suffereth Shall Learn; the law holdeth well.

And that which is to be,

Ye will know at last; why weep before the hour?

For come it shall, as out of darkness dawn.

Only may good from all this evil flower;

So prays this Heart of Argos, this frail tower

Guarding the land alone.

[As they cease, CLYTEMNESTRA comes from the Palace
with Attendants. She has finished her prayer and
sacrifice, and is now wrought up to face the meeting
with her husband. The Leader approaches her.]

LEADER.

Before thy state, O Queen, I bow mine eyes.

'Tis written, when the man's throne empty lies,

The woman shall be honoured.—Hast thou heard

Some tidings sure? Or is it Hope, hath stirred

To fire these altars? Dearly though we seek

To learn, 'tis thine to speak or not to speak.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Glad-voiced, the old saw telleth, comes this morn,

The Star-child of a dancing midnight born,

And beareth to thine ear a word of joy

Beyond all hope: the Greek hath taken Troy.

LEADER.

How?

Thy word flies past me, being incredible.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ilion is ours. No riddling tale I tell.

LEADER.

Such joy comes knocking at the gate of tears.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, 'tis a faithful heart that eye declares.

LEADER.

What warrant hast thou? Is there proof of this?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There is; unless a God hath lied there is.

LEADER.

Some dream-shape came to thee in speaking guise?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who deemeth me a dupe of drowsing eyes?

LEADER.

Some word within that hovereth without wings?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Am I a child to hearken to such things?

LEADER.

Troy fallen?—But how long? When fell she, say?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

The very night that mothered this new day.

LEADER.

And who of heralds with such fury came?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

A Fire-god, from Mount Ida scattering flame.
Whence starting, beacon after beacon burst
In flaming message hitherward. Ida first
Told Hermes' Lemnian Rock, whose answering sign
Was caught by towering Athos, the divine,
With pines immense—yea, fishes of the night
Swam skyward, drunken with that leaping light,
Which swelled like some strange sun, till dim and far
Makistos' watchmen marked a glimmering star;
They, nowise loath nor idly slumber-won,
Spring up to hurl the fiery message on,
And a far light beyond the Eurîpus tells

That word hath reached Messapion's sentinels.
They beaconed back, then onward with a high
Heap of dead heather flaming to the sky.
And onward still, not failing nor aswoon,
Across the Asôpus like a beaming moon
The great word leapt, and on Kithairon's height
Uproused a new relay of racing light.
His watchers knew the wandering flame, nor hid
Their welcome, burning higher than was bid.
Out over Lake Gorgôpis then it floats,
To Aigiplanctos, waking the wild goats,
Crying for "Fire, more Fire!" And fire was reared,
Stintless and high, a stormy streaming beard,
That waved in flame beyond the promontory
Rock-ridged, that watches the Saronian sea,
Kindling the night: then one short swoop to catch
The Spider's Crag, our city's tower of watch;
Whence hither to the Atreidae's roof it came,
A light true-fathered of Idaean flame.
Torch-bearer after torch-bearer, behold
The tale thereof in stations manifold,
Each one by each made perfect ere it passed,
And Victory in the first as in the last.
These be my proofs and tokens that my lord
From Troy hath spoke to me a burning word.

LEADER.

Woman, speak on. Hereafter shall my prayer
Be raised to God; now let me only hear,
Again and full, the marvel and the joy.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Now, even now, the Achaian holdeth Troy!
Methinks there is a crying in her streets
That makes no concord. When sweet unguent meets
With vinegar in one phial, I warrant none
Shall lay those wranglers lovingly at one.
So conquerors and conquered shalt thou hear,

Two Sundered tones, two lives of joy or fear.

Here women in the dust about their slain,
Husbands or brethren, and by dead old men
Pale children who shall never more be free,
For all they loved on earth cry desolately.
And hard beside them war-stained Greeks, whom stark
Battle and then long searching through the dark
Hath gathered, ravenous, in the dawn, to feast
At last on all the plenty Troy possessed,
No portion in that feast nor ordinance,
But each man clutching at the prize of chance.
Aye, there at last under good roofs they lie
Of men spear-quelled, no frosts beneath the sky,
No watches more, no bitter moony dew. . . .
How blessed they will sleep the whole night through!
Oh, if these days they keep them free from sin
Toward Ilion's conquered shrines and Them within
Who watch unconquered, maybe not again
The smiter shall be smit, the taker ta'en.
May God but grant there fall not on that host
The greed of gold that maddeneth and the lust
To spoil inviolate things! But half the race
Is run which windeth back to home and peace.
Yea, though of God they pass unchallengèd,
Methinks the wound of all those desolate dead
Might waken, groping for its will. . . .

Ye hear

A woman's word, belike a woman's fear.
May good but conquer in the last incline
Of the balance! Of all prayers that prayer is mine.

LEADER.

O Woman, like a man faithful and wise
Thou speakest. I accept thy testimonies
And turn to God with praising, for a gain
Is won this day that pays for all our pain.

[CLYTEMNESTRA returns to the Palace. The CHORUS
take up their position for the Second Stasimon.]

AN ELDER.

O Zeus, All-ruler, and Night the Aid,
 Gainer of glories, and hast thou thrown
 Over the towers of Ilion

Thy net close-laid,
 That none so nimble and none so tall
 Shall escape withal
 The snare of the slaver that claspeth all?

ANOTHER.

And Zeus the Watcher of Friend and Friend
 I also praise, who hath wrought this end.
 Long since on Paris his shaft he drew,
 And hath aimed true,
 Not too soon falling nor yet too far,
 The fire of the avenging star.

CHORUS.

*(This is God's judgment upon Troy. May it not be too fierce!
 Gold cannot save one who spurneth Justice.)*

The stroke of Zeus hath found them! Clear this day
 The tale, and plain to trace.
 He judged, and Troy hath fallen.—And have men said
 That God not deigns to mark man's hardihead,
 Trampling to earth the grace
 Of holy and delicate things?—Sin lies that way.
 For visibly Pride doth breed its own return
 On prideful men, who, when their houses swell
 With happy wealth, breathe ever wrath and
 blood.
 Yet not too fierce let the due vengeance burn;
 Only as deemeth well
 One wise of mood.
 Never shall state nor gold
 Shelter his heart from aching
 Whoso the Altar of Justice old
 Spurneth to Night unwaking.

(The Sinner suffers in his longing till at last Temptation overcomes him; as longing for Helen overcame Paris.)

The tempting of misery forceth him, the dread

Child of fore-scheming Woe!

And help is vain; the fell desire within

Is veiled not, but shineth bright like Sin:

And as false gold will show

Black where the touchstone trieth, so doth fade

His honour in God's ordeal. Like a child,

Forgetting all, he hath chased his wingèd bird,

And planted amid his people a sharp thorn.

And no God hears his prayer, or, have they heard,

The man so base-beguiled

They cast to scorn.

Paris to Argos came;

Love of a woman led him;

So God's altar he brought to shame,

Robbing the hand that fed him.

*(Helen's flight; the visions seen by the King's seers;
the phantom of Helen and the King's grief.)*

She hath left among her people a noise of shield and sword,

A tramp of men armèd where the long ships are moored;

She hath ta'en in her goings Desolation as a dower;

She hath stept, stept quickly, through the great gated Tower,

And the thing that could not be, it hath been!

And the Seers they saw visions, and they spoke of strange ill:

"A Palace, a Palace; and a great King thereof:

A bed, a bed empty, that was once pressed in love:

And thou, thou, what art thou? Let us be, thou so still,

Beyond wrath, beyond beseeching, to the lips reft of thee!"

For she whom he desireth is beyond the deep sea,
And a ghose in his castle shall be queen.

Images in sweet guise
Carven shall move him never,
Where is Love amid empty eyes?
Gone, gone for ever!

*(His dreams and his suffering; but the War that he made
caused greater and wider suffering.)*

But a shape that is a dream, 'mid the breathings of the night,
Cometh near, full of tears, bringing vain vain delight:
For in vain when, desiring, he can feel the joy's breath
—Nevermore! Nevermore!—from his arms it vanisheth,
As a bird along the wind-ways of sleep.
In the mid castle hall, on the hearthstone of the Kings,
These griefs there be, and griefs passing these,
But in each man's dwelling of the host that sailed the seas,
A sad woman waits; she has thoughts of many things,
And patience in her heart lieth deep.

Knoweth she them she sent,
Knoweth she? Lo, returning,
Comes in stead of the man that went
Armour and dust of burning.

(The return of the funeral urns; the murmurs of the People.)

And the gold-chaser, Ares, who changeth quick for dead,
Who poiseth his scale in the striving of the spears,
Back from Troy sendeth dust, heavy dust, wet with tears,
Sendeth ashes with men's names in his urns neatly spread.
And they weep over the men, and they praise them one by
one,
How this was a wise fighter, and this nobly slain—
"Fighting to win back another's wife!"
Till a murmur is begun,
And there steals an angry pain
Against Kings too forward in the strife.

There by Ilion's gate
 Many a soldier sleepeth,
 Young men beautiful; fast in hate
 Troy her conqueror keepeth.

*(For the Shedder of Blood is in great peril, and not unmarked
 by God. May I never be a Sacker of Cities!)*

But the rumour of the People, it is heavy, it is chill;
 And tho' no curse be spoken, like a curse doth it brood;
 And my heart waits some tiding which the dark holdeth
 still,

For of God not unmarked is the shedder of much blood.
 And who conquers beyond right . . . Lo, the life of man
 decays;

There be Watchers dim his light in the wasting of the years;
 He falls, he is forgotten, and hope dies.

There is peril in the praise
 Over-praisèd that he hears;
 For the thunder it is hurled from God's eyes.

Glory that breedeth strife,
 Pride of the Sacker of Cities;
 Yea, and the conquered captive's life,
 Spare me, O God of Pities!

DIVERS ELDERS.

—The fire of good tidings it hath sped the city through,
 But who knows if a god mocketh? Or who knows if all be
 true?

'Twere the fashion of a child,
 Or a brain dream-beguiled,
 To be kindled by the first
 Torch's message as it burst,
 And thereafter, as it dies, to die too.

—'Tis like a woman's sceptre, to ordain
 Welcome to joy before the end is plain!

—Too lightly opened are a woman's ears;
 Her fence downtrod by many trespassers,

And quickly crossed; but quickly lost
The burden of a woman's hopes or fears.

[*Here a break occurs in the action, like the descent of the curtain in a modern theatre. A space of some days is assumed to have passed and we find the Elders again assembled.*]

LEADER.

Soon surely shall we read the message right;
Were fire and beacon-call and lamps of light
True speakers, or but happy things that seem
And are not, like sweet voices in a dream.
I see a Herald yonder by the shore,
Shadowed with olive sprays. And from his sore
Rent raiment cries a witness from afar,
Dry Dust, born brother to the Mire of war,
That mute he comes not, neither through the smoke
Of mountain forests shall his tale be spoke;
But either shouting for a joyful day,
Or else. . . . But other thoughts I cast away.
As good hath dawned, may good shine on, we pray!
—And whoso for this City prayeth aught
Else, let him reap the harvest of his thought!

[*Enter the HERALD, running. His garments are torn and war-stained. He falls upon his knees and kisses the Earth, and salutes each Altar in turn.*]

HERALD.

Land of my fathers! Argos! Am I here . . .
Home, home at this tenth shining of the year,
And all Hope's anchors broken save this one!
For scarcely dared I dream, here in mine own
Argos at last to fold me to my rest. . . .
But now—All Hail, O Earth! O Sunlight blest!
And Zeus Most High!

[*Checking himself as he sees the altar of Apollo.*]

And thou, O Pythian Lord;

No more on us be thy swift arrows poured!
Beside Scamander well we learned how true
Thy hate is. Oh, as thou art Healer too,
Heal us! As thou art Saviour of the Lost,
Save also us, Apollo, being so tossed
With tempest! . . . All ye Daemons of the Pale!
And Hermes! Hermes, mine own guardian, hail!
Herald beloved, to whom all heralds bow. . . .
Ye Blessèd Dead that sent us, receive now
In love your children whom the spear hath spared.

O House of Kings, O roof-tree thrice-endearèd, .
O solemn thrones! O gods that face the sun!
Now, now, if ever in the days foregone,
After these many years, with eyes that burn,
Give hail and glory to your King's return!
For Agamemnon cometh! A great light
Cometh to men and gods out of the night.

Grand greeting give him—aye, it need be grand—
Who, God's avenging mattock in his hand,
Hath wrecked Troy's towers and digged her soil beneath,
Till her gods' houses, they are things of death;
Her altars waste, and blasted every seed
Whence life might rise! So perfect is his deed,
So dire the yoke on Ilion he hath cast,
The first Atreides, King of Kings at last,
And happy among men! To whom we give
Honour most high above all things that live.

For Paris nor his guilty land can score
The deed they wrought above the pain they bore.
"Spoiler and thief," he heard God's judgment pass;
Whereby he lost his plunder, and like grass
Mowed down his father's house and all his land;
And Troy pays twofold for the sin she planned.

LEADER.

Be glad, thou Herald of the Greek from Troy!

HERALD.

So glad, I am ready, if God will, to die!

LEADER.

Did love of this land work thee such distress?

HERALD.

The tears stand in mine eyes for happiness.

LEADER.

Sweet sorrow was it, then, that on you fell.

HERALD.

How sweet? I cannot read thy parable.

LEADER.

To pine again for them that loved you true.

HERALD.

Did ye then pine for us, as we for you?

LEADER.

The whole land's heart was dark, and groaned for thee.

HERALD.

Dark? For what cause? Why should such darkness be?

LEADER.

Silence in wrong is our best medicine here.

HERALD.

Your kings were gone. What others need you fear?

LEADER.

'Tis past! Like thee now, I could gladly die.

HERALD.

Even so! 'Tis past, and all is victory.
And, for our life in those long years, there were
Doubtless some grievous days, and some were fair.
Who but a god goes woundless all his way? . . .

Oh, could I tell the sick toil of the day,
 The evil nights, scant decks ill-blanketed;
 The rage and cursing when our daily bread
 Came not! And then on land 'twas worse than all.
 Our quarters close beneath the enemy's wall;
 And rain—and from the ground the river dew—
 Wet, always wet! Into our clothes it grew,
 Plague-like, and bred foul beasts in every hair.

Would I could tell how ghastly midwinter
 Stole down from Ida till the birds dropped dead!
 Or the still heat, when on his noonday bed
 The breathless blue sea sank without a wave! . . .

Why think of it? They are past and in the grave,
 All those long troubles. For I think the slain
 Care little if they sleep or rise again;
 And we, the living, wherefore should we ache
 With counting all our lost ones, till we wake
 The old malignant fortunes? If Good-bye
 Comes from their side, Why, let them go, say I.
 Surely for us, who live, good doth prevail
 Unchallenged, with no wavering of the scale;
 Wherefore we vaunt unto these shining skies,
 As wide o'er sea and land our glory flies:
 "By men of Argolis who conquered Troy,
 These spoils, a memory and an ancient joy,
 Are nailed in the gods' houses throughout Greece."
 Which whoso readeth shall with praise increase
 Our land, our kings, and God's grace manifold
 Which made these marvels be.—My tale is told.

LEADER.

Indeed thou conquerest me. Men say, the light
 In old men's eyes yet serves to learn aright.
 But Clytemnestra and the House should hear
 These tidings first, though I their health may share.

[*During the last words CLYTEMNESTRA has entered from the Palace.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Long since I lifted up my voice in joy,
 When the first messenger from flaming Troy
 Spake through the dark of sack and overthrow.
 And mockers chid me: "Because beacons show
 On the hills, must Troy be fallen? Quickly born
 Are women's hopes!" Aye, many did me scorn;
 Yet gave I sacrifice; and by my word
 Through all the city our woman's cry was heard,
 Lifted in blessing round the seats of God,
 And slumbrous incense o'er the altars glowed
 In fragrance.

And for thee, what need to tell
 Thy further tale? My lord himself shall well
 Instruct me. Yet, to give my lord and king
 All reverent greeting at his homecoming—
 What dearer dawn on woman's eyes can flame
 Than this, which casteth wide her gate to acclaim
 The husband whom God leadeth safe from war?—
 Go, bear my lord this prayer: That fast and far
 He haste him to this town which loves his name;
 And in his castle may he find the same
 Wife that he left, a watchdog of the hall,
 True to one voice and fierce to others all;
 A body and soul unchanged, no seal of his
 Broke in the waiting years.—No thought of ease
 Nor joy from other men hath touched my soul,
 Nor shall touch, until bronze be dyed like wool.

A boast so faithful and so plain, I wot,
 Spoke by a royal Queen doth shame her not.

[*Exit* CLYTEMNESTRA.]

LEADER.

Let thine ear mark her message. 'Tis of fair
 Seeming, and craves a clear interpreter. . . .
 But, Herald, I would ask thee; tell me true
 Of Menelaüs. Shall he come with you,
 Our land's belovèd crown, untouched of ill?

HERALD.

I know not how to speak false words of weal
For friends to reap thereof a harvest true.

LEADER.

Canst speak of truth with comfort joined? Those two
Once parted, 'tis a gulf not lightly crossed.

HERALD.

Your king is vanished from the Achaian host,
He and his ship! Such comfort have I brought.

LEADER.

Sailed he alone from Troy? Or was he caught
By storms in the midst of you, and swept away?

HERALD.

Thou hast hit the truth; good marksman, as men say!
And long to suffer is but brief to tell.

LEADER.

How ran the sailors' talk? Did there prevail
One rumour, showing him alive or dead?

HERALD.

None knoweth, none hath tiding, save the head
Of Helios, ward and watcher of the world.

LEADER.

Then tell us of the storm. How, when God hurled
His anger, did it rise? How did it die?

HERALD.

It likes me not, a day of presage high
With dolorous tongue to stain. Those twain, I vow,
Stand best apart. When one with shuddering brow,
From armies lost, back beareth to his home
Word that the terror of her prayers is come;

One wound in her great heart, and many a fate
For many a home of men cast out to sate
The two-fold scourge that worketh Ares' lust,
Spear crossed with spear, dust wed with bloody dust;
Who walketh laden with such weight of wrong,
Why, let him, if he will, uplift the song
That is Hell's triumph. But to come as I
Am now come, laden with deliverance high,
Home to a land of peace and laughing eyes,
And mar all with that fury of the skies
Which made our Greeks curse God—how should this be?

Two enemies most ancient, Fire and Sea,
A sudden friendship swore, and proved their plight
By war on us poor sailors through that night
Of misery, when the horror of the wave
Towered over us, and winds from Strymon drave
Hull against hull, till good ships, by the horn
Of the mad whirlwind gored and overborne,
One here, one there, 'mid rain and blinding spray,
Like sheep by a devil herded, passed away.
And when the blessèd Sun upraised his head,
We saw the Aegean waste a-foam with dead,
Dead men, dead ships, and spars disasterful.
Howbeit for us, our one unwounded hull
Out of that wrath was stolen or begged free
By some good spirit—sure no man was he!—
Who guided clear our helm; and on till now
Hath Saviour Fortune throned her on the prow,
No surge to mar our mooring, and no floor
Of rock to tear us when we made for shore.
Till, fled from that sea-hell, with the clear sun
Above us and all trust in fortune gone,
We drove like sheep the thoughts about our brain
Of that lost army, broken and scourged amain
With evil. And, methinks, if there is breath
In them, they talk of us as gone to death—
How else?—and so say we of them! For thee,

Since Menelaüs thy first care must be,
 If by some word of Zeus, who wills not yet
 To leave the old house for ever desolate,
 Some ray of sunlight on a far-off sea
 Lights him, yet green and living . . . we may see
 His ship some day in the harbour!—'Twas the word
 Of truth ye asked me for, and truth ye have heard!

[*Exit HERALD. The CHORUS take position for the Third Stasimon.*]

CHORUS.

(Surely there was mystic meaning in the name HELENA, meaning which was fulfilled when she fled to Troy.)

Who was He who found for thee
 That name, truthful utterly—
 Was it One beyond our vision
 Moving sure in pre-decision
 Of man's doom his mystic lips?—
 Calling thee, the Battle-wed,
 Thee, the Strife-encompassèd,
 Helen? Yea, in fate's derision,
 Hell in cities, Hell in ships,
 Hell in hearts of men they knew her,
 When the dim and delicate fold
 Of her curtains backward rolled,
 And to sea, to sea, she threw her
 In the West Wind's giant hold;
 And with spear and sword behind her
 Came the hunters in a flood,
 Down the oarblade's viewless trail
 Tracking, till in Simoïs' vale
 Through the leaves they crept to find her,
 A Wrath, a seed of blood.

(The Trojans welcomed her with triumph and praised Alexander, till at last their song changed and they saw another meaning in Alexander's name also.)

So the Name to Ilion came
 On God's thought-fulfilling flame,
 She a vengeance and a token
 Of the unfaith to bread broken,
 Of the hearth of God betrayed,
 Against them whose voices swelled
 Glorifying in the prize they held
 And the Spoiler's vaunt outspoken
 And the song his brethren made
 'Mid the bridal torches burning;
 Till, behold, the ancient City
 Of King Priam turned, and turning
 Took a new song for her learning,
 A song changed and full of pity,
 With the cry of a lost nation;
 And she changed the bridegroom's name:
 Called him Paris Ghastly-wed;
 For her sons were with the dead,
 And her life one lamentation,
 'Mid blood and burning flame.

*(Like a lion's whelp reared as a pet and turning afterwards
 to a great beast of prey.)*

Lo, once there was a herdsman reared
 In his own house, so stories tell,
 A lion's whelp, a milk-fed thing
 And soft in life's first opening
 Among the sucklings of the herd;
 The happy children loved him well,
 And old men smiled, and oft, they say,
 In men's arms, like a babe, he lay,
 Bright-eyed, and toward the hand that teased him
 Eagerly fawning for food or play.
 Then on a day outflashed the sudden
 Rage of the lion brood of yore;
 He paid his debt to them that fed
 With wrack of herds and carnage red.

Yea, wrought him a great feast unbidden,
 Till all the house-ways ran with gore;
 A sight the thralls fled weeping from,
 A great red slayer, beard a-foam,
 High-priest of some blood-cursèd altar
 God had uplifted against that home.

(So was it with Helen in Troy.)

And how shall I call the thing that came
 At the first hour to Ilion city?
 Call it a dream of peace untold,
 A secret joy in a mist of gold,
 A woman's eye that was soft, like flame,
 A flower which ate a man's heart with pity.

But she swerved aside and wrought to her kiss a bitter ending,
 And a wrath was on her harbouring, a wrath upon her
 friending,

When to Priam and his sons she fled quickly o'er the deep,
 With the god to whom she sinned for her watcher on the wind,
 A death-bride, whom brides long shall weep.

*(Men say that Good Fortune wakes the envy of God; not so;
 Good Fortune may be innocent, and then there is no
 vengeance.)*

A grey word liveth, from the morn
 Of old time among mortals spoken,
 That man's Wealth waxen full shall fall
 Not childless, but get sons withal;
 And ever of great bliss is born
 A tear unstanchèd and a heart broken.

But I hold my thought alone and by others unbeguiled;
 'Tis the deed that is unholy shall have issue, child on child,
 Sin on sin, like his begetters; and they shall be as they were.
 But the man who walketh straight, and the house thereof,
 tho' Fate
 Exalt him, the children shall be fair.

(It is Sin, it is Pride and Ruthlessness, that beget children like themselves till Justice is fulfilled upon them.)

But Old Sin loves, when comes the hour again,
 To bring forth New,
 Which laugheth lusty amid the tears of men;
 Yea, and Unruth, his comrade, wherewith none
 May plead nor strive, which dareth on and on,
 Knowing not fear nor any holy thing;
 Two fires of darkness in a house, born true,
 Like to their ancient spring.
 But Justice shineth in a house low-wrought
 With smoke-stained wall,
 And honoureth him who filleth his own lot;
 But the unclean hand upon the golden stair
 With eyes averse she flieth, seeking where
 Things innocent are; and, recking not the power
 Of wealth by man misgloried, guideth all
 To her own destined hour.

[Here amid a great procession enter AGAMEMNON on a Chariot. Behind him on another Chariot is CASSANDRA. The CHORUS approach and make obeisance. Some of AGAMEMNON's men have on their shields a White Horse, some a Lion. Their arms are rich and partly barbaric.]

LEADER.

All hail, O King! Hail, Atreus' Son!
 Sacker of Cities! Ilion's bane!
 With what high word shall I greet thee again,
 How give thee worship, and neither outrun
 The point of pleasure, nor stint too soon?
 For many will cling to fair seeming
 The faster because they have sinned erewhile;
 And a man may sigh with never a sting
 Of grief in his heart, and a man may smile
 With eyes unlit and a lip that strains.
 But the wise Shepherd knoweth his sheep,

And his eyes pierce deep
The faith like water that fawns and feigns.

But I hide nothing, O King. That day
When in quest of Helen our battle array
Hurled forth, thy name upon my heart's scroll
Was deep in letters of discord writ;

And the ship of thy soul,
Ill-helmed and blindly steered was it,
Pursuing ever, through men that die,
One wild heart that was fain to fly.

But on this new day,
From the deep of my thought and in love, I say
"Sweet is a grief well ended";

And in time's flow Thou wilt learn and know
The true from the false,
Of them that were left to guard the walls
Of thine empty Hall unfriended.

[*During the above CLYTEMNESTRA has appeared on the
Palace steps, with a train of Attendants, to receive
her Husband.*]

AGAMEMNON.

To Argos and the gods of Argolis
All hail, who share with me the glory of this
Home-coming and the vengeance I did wreak
On Priam's City! Yea, though none should speak,
The great gods heard our cause, and in one mood
Uprising, in the urn of bitter blood,
That men should shriek and die and towers should burn,
Cast their great vote; while over Mercy's urn
Hope waved her empty hands and nothing fell.

Even now in smoke that City tells her tale;
The wrack-wind liveth, and where Ilion died
The reek of the old fatness of her pride
From hot and writhing ashes rolls afar.

For which let thanks, wide as our glories are,

Be uplifted; seeing the Beast of Argos hath
Round Ilion's towers piled high his fence of wrath
And, for one woman ravished, wrecked by force
A City. Lo, the leap of the wild Horse
In darkness when the Pleiades were dead;
A mailed multitude, a Lion unfed,
Which leapt the tower and lapt the blood of Kings!

Lo, to the Gods I make these thanksgivings.
But for thy words: I marked them, and I mind
Their meaning, and my voice shall be behind
Thine. For not many men, the proverb saith,
Can love a friend whom fortune prospereth
Unenvying; and about the envious brain
Cold poison clings, and doubles all the pain
Life brings him. His own woundings he must nurse,
And feels another's gladness like a curse.

Well can I speak. I know the mirrored glass
Called friendship, and the shadow shapes that pass
And feign them a King's friends. I have known but one—
Odysseus, him we trapped against his own
Will!—who once harnessed bore his yoke right well . . .
Be he alive or dead of whom I tell
The tale. And for the rest, touching our state
And gods, we will assemble in debate
A concourse of all Argos, taking sure
Counsel, that what is well now may endure
Well, and if aught needs healing medicine, still
By cutting and by fire, with all good will,
I will essay to avert the after-wrack
Such sickness breeds.

Aye, Heaven hath led me back;
And on this hearth where still my fire doth burn
I will go pay to heaven my due return,
Which guides me here, which saved me far away.
O Victory, now mine own, be mine alway!

[CLYTEMNESTRA, at the head of her retinue, steps forward. She controls her suspense with difficulty but gradually gains courage as she proceeds.]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ye Elders, Council of the Argive name
Here present, I will no more hold it shame
To lay my passion bare before men's eyes.
There comes a time to a woman when fear dies
For ever. None hath taught me. None could tell,
Save me, the weight of years intolerable
I lived while this man lay at Ilion.
That any woman thus should sit alone
In a half-empty house, with no man near,
Makes her half-blind with dread! And in her ear
Always some voice of wrath; now messengers
Of evil; now not so; then others worse,
Crying calamity against mine and me.

Oh, had he half the wounds that variously
Came rumoured home, his flesh must be a net,
All holes from heel to crown! And if he met
As many deaths as I met tales thereon,
Is he some monstrous thing, some Gêryon
Three-souled, that will not die, till o'er his head,
Three robes of earth be piled, to hold him dead?

Aye, many a time my heart broke, and the noose
Of death had got me; but they cut me loose.
It was those voices alway in mine ear.

For that, too, young Orestes is not here
Beside me, as were meet, seeing he above
All else doth hold the surety of our love;
Let not thy heart be troubled. It fell thus:
Our loving spear-friend took him, Strophius
The Phocian, who forewarned me of annoy
Two-fronted, thine own peril under Troy,
And ours here, if the rebel multitude

Should cast the Council down. It is men's mood
Always, to spurn the fallen. So spake he,
And sure no guile was in him.

But for me,
The old stormy rivers of my grief are dead
Now at the spring; not one tear left unshed.
Mine eyes are sick with vigil, endlessly
Weeping the beacon-piles that watched for thee
For ever answerless. And did I dream,
A gnat's thin whirr would start me, like a scream
Of battle, and show me thee by terrors swept,
Crowding, too many for the time I slept.

From all which stress delivered and free-souled,
I greet my lord: O watchdog of the fold,
O forestay sure that fails not in the squall,
O strong-based pillar of a towering hall;
O single son to a father age-ridden;
O land unhopèd for seen by shipwrecked men;
Sunshine more beautiful when storms are fled;
Spring of quick water in a desert dead. . . .
How sweet to be set free from any chain!

These be my words to greet him home again.
No god shall grudge them. Surely I and thou
Have suffered in time past enough! And now
Dismount, O head with love and glory crowned,
From this high car; yet plant not on bare ground
Thy foot, great King, the foot that trampled Troy.

Ho, bondmaids, up! Forget not your employ,
A floor of crimson broideries to spread
For the King's path. Let all the ground be red
Where those feet pass; and Justice, dark of yore,
Home light him to the hearth he looks not for!

What followeth next, our sleepless care shall see
Ordered as God's good pleasure may decree.

[*The attendants spread tapestries of crimson and gold from the Chariot to the Door of the Palace. AGAMEMNON does not move.*]

AGAMEMNON.

Daughter of Leda, watcher of my fold,
 In sooth thy welcome, grave and amply told,
 Fitteth mine absent years. Though it had been
 Seemlier, methinks, some other, not my Queen,
 Had spoke these honours. For the rest, I say,
 Seek not to make me soft in woman's way;
 Cry not thy praise to me wide-mouthed, nor fling
 Thy body down, as to some barbarous king.
 Nor yet with broidered hangings strew my path,
 To awake the unseen ire. 'Tis God that hath
 Such worship; and for mortal man to press
 Rude feet upon this broidered loveliness . . .
 I vow there is danger in it. Let my road
 Be honoured, surely; but as man, not god.
 Rugs for the feet and yonder broidered pall . . .
 The names ring diverse! . . . Aye, and not to fall
 Suddenly blind is of all gifts the best
 God giveth, for I reckon no man blest
 Ere to the utmost goal his race be run.

So be it; and if, as this day I have done,
 I shall do always, then I fear no ill.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Tell me but this, nowise against thy will . . .

AGAMEMNON.

My will, be sure, shall falter not nor fade.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Was this a vow in some great peril made?

AGAMEMNON.

Enough! I have spoke my purpose, fixed and plain.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Were Priam the conqueror . . . Think, would he refrain?

AGAMEMNON.

Oh, stores of broideries would be trampled then!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Lord, care not for the cavillings of men!

AGAMEMNON.

The murmur of a people hath strange weight.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Who feareth envy, feareth to be great.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis graceless when a woman strives to lead.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

When a great conqueror yields, 'tis grace indeed.

AGAMEMNON.

So in this war thou must my conqueror be?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Yield! With good will to yield is victory!

AGAMEMNON.

Well, if I needs must . . . Be it as thou hast said!

Quick! Loose me these bound slaves on which I tread,
And while I walk yon wonders of the sea
God grant no eye of wrath be cast on me
From far!

[*The Attendants untie his shoes.*]

For even now it likes me not

To waste mine house, thus marring underfoot
The pride thereof, and wondrous broideries
Bought in far seas with silver. But of these
Enough.—And mark, I charge thee, this princess

Of Ilion; tend her with all gentleness.
 God's eye doth see, and loveth from afar,
 The merciful conqueror. For no slave of war
 Is slave by his own will. She is the prize
 And chosen flower of Ilion's treasures,
 Set by the soldiers' gift to follow me.

Now therefore, seeing I am constrained by thee
 And do thy will, I walk in conqueror's guise
 Beneath my Gate, trampling sea-crimson dyes.

*[As he dismounts and sets foot on the Tapestries CLY-
 TEMNESTRA's women utter again their Cry of Triumph.
 The people bow or kneel as he passes.]*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

There is the sea—its caverns who shall drain?
 Breeding of many a purple-fish the stain
 Surpassing silver, ever fresh renewed,
 For robes of kings. And we, by right indeed,
 Possess our fill thereof. Thy house, O King,
 Knoweth no stint, nor lack of anything.

What trampling of rich raiment, had the cry
 So sounded in the domes of prophesy,
 Would I have vowed these years, as price to pay
 For this dear life in peril far away!
 Where the root is, the leafage cometh soon
 To clothe an house, and spread its leafy boon
 Against the burning star; and, thou being come,
 Thou, on the midmost hearthstone of thy home,
 Oh, warmth in winter leapeth to thy sign.
 And when God's summer melteth into wine
 The green grape, on that house shall coolness fall
 Where the true man, the master, walks his hall.

Zeus, Zeus! True Master, let my prayers be true!
 And, oh, forget not that thou art willed to do!

*[She follows AGAMEMNON into the Palace. The retinues
 of both King and Queen go in after them. CASSANDRA
 remains.]*

CHORUS.

What is this that evermore,
A cold terror at the door
Of this bosom presage-haunted,
Pale as death hovereth?
While a song unhired, unwanted,
By some inward prophet chanted,
Speaks the secret at its core;
And to cast it from my blood
Like a dream not understood
No sweet-spoken Courage now
Sitteth at my heart's dear prow.

Yet I know that manifold
Days, like sand, have waxen old
Since the day those shoreward-thrown
Cables flapped and line on line
Standing forth for Ilion
The long galleys took the brine.

[*Antistrophe 1.*]

And in harbour—mine own eye
Hath beheld—again they lie;
Yet that lyreless music hidden
Whispers still words of ill,
'Tis the Soul of me unbidden,
Like some Fury sorrow-ridden,
Weeping over things that die.
Neither waketh in my sense
Ever Hope's dear confidence;
For this flesh that groans within,
And these bones that know of Sin,
This tossed heart upon the spate
Of a whirlpool that is Fate,
Surely these lie not. Yet deep
Beneath hope my prayer doth run,
All will die like dreams, and creep
To the unthought of and undone.

—Surely of great Weal at the end of all [*Strophe 2.*]
Comes not Content; so near doth Fever crawl,
Close neighbour, pressing hard the narrow wall.

—Woe to him who fears not fate!
'Tis the ship that forward straight
Sweepeth, strikes the reef below;
He who fears and lightens weight,
Casting forth, in measured throw,
From the wealth his hand hath got . . .
His whole ship shall founder not,
With abundance overfraught,
Nor deep seas above him flow.

—Lo, when famine stalketh near,
One good gift of Zeus again
From the furrows of one year
Endeth quick the starving pain;

[*Antistrophe 2.*]

—But once the blood of death is fallen, black
And oozing at a slain man's feet, alack!
By spell or singing who shall charm it back?

—One there was of old who showed
Man the path from death to day;
But Zeus, lifting up his rod,
Spared not, when he charged him stay.

—Save that every doom of God
Hath by other dooms its way
Crossed, that none may rule alone,
In one speech-outstripping flood
Forth had all this passion flown,
Which now murmuring hides away,
Full of pain, and hoping not
Ever one clear thread to unknot
From the tangle of my soul,
From a heart of burning coal.

[*Suddenly CLYTEMNESTRA appears
standing in the Doorway.*]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou likewise, come within! I speak thy name,
Cassandra;

[CASSANDRA trembles, but continues to stare in front of
her, as though not hearing CLYTEMNESTRA.]

seeing the Gods—why chafe at them?—

Have placed thee here, to share within these walls
Our lustral waters, 'mid a crowd of thralls
Who stand obedient round the altar-stone
Of our Possession. Therefore come thou down,
And be not over-proud. The tale is told
How once Alcêmêna's son himself, being sold,
Was patient, though he liked not the slaves' mess.

And more, if Fate must bring thee to this stress,
Praise God thou art come to a House of high report
And wealth from long ago. The baser sort,
Who have reaped some sudden harvest unforeseen,
Are ever cruel to their slaves, and mean
In the measure. We shall give whate'er is due.

[CASSANDRA is silent.]

LEADER.

To thee she speaks, and waits . . . clear words and true!
Oh, doom is all around thee like a net;
Yield, if thou canst . . . Belike thou canst not yet.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Methinks, unless this wandering maid is one
Voiced like a swallow-bird, with tongue unknown
And barbarous, she can read my plain intent.
I use but words, and ask for her consent.

LEADER.

Ah, come! 'Tis best, as the world lies to-day.
Leave this high-thronèd chariot, and obey!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

How long must I stand dallying at the Gate?
Even now the beasts to Hestia consecrate

Wait by the midmost fire, since there is wrought
 This high fulfilment for which no man thought.
 Wherefore, if 'tis thy pleasure to obey
 Aught of my will, prithee, no more delay!
 If, deaf to sense, thou wilt not understand . . .
 Thou show her, not with speech but with brute hand!

[*To the Leader of the CHORUS.*]

LEADER.

The strange maid needs a rare interpreter.
 She is trembling like a wild beast in a snare.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

'Fore God, she is mad, and heareth but her own
 Folly! A slave, her city all o'erthrown,
 She needs must chafe her bridle, till this fret
 Be foamed away in blood and bitter sweat.
 I waste no more speech, thus to be defied.

[*She goes back inside the Palace.*]

LEADER.

I pity thee so sore, no wrath nor pride
 Is in me.—Come, dismount! Bend to the stroke
 Fate lays on thee, and learn to feel thy yoke.

[*He lays his hand softly on CASSANDRA's shoulder.*]

CASSANDRA (*moaning to herself*).

Otototoi . . . Dreams. Dreams.

Apollo. O Apollo!

SECOND ELDER.

Why sob'st thou for Apollo? It is writ,
 He loves not grief nor lendeth ear to it.

CASSANDRA.

Otototoi . . . Dreams. Dreams.

Apollo. O Apollo!

LEADER.

Still to that god she makes her sobbing cry
Who hath no place where men are sad, or die.

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, Apollo! Light of the Ways of Men!
Mine enemy!

Hast lighted me to darkness yet again?

SECOND ELDER.

How? Will she prophesy about her own
Sorrows? That power abides when all is gone!

CASSANDRA.

Apollo, Apollo! Light of all that is!
Mine enemy!

Where hast thou led me? . . . Ha! What house is this?

LEADER.

The Atreidae's castle. If thou knowest not, I
Am here to help thee, and help faithfully.

CASSANDRA (*whispering*).

Nay, nay. This is the house that God hateth.

There be many things that know its secret; sore
And evil things; murders and strangling death.

'Tis here they slaughter men . . . A splashing floor.

SECOND ELDER.

Keen-sensed the strange maid seemeth, like a hound
For blood.—And what she seeks can sure be found!

CASSANDRA.

The witnesses . . . I follow where they lead.

That weeping: here quite close: children are there,

Weeping: and wounds that bleed.

The smell of the baked meats their father tare.

SECOND ELDER (*recognizing her vision, and repelled*).

Word of thy mystic power had reached our ear

Long since. Howbeit we need no prophets here.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, ah! What would they? A new dreadful thing.

A great great sin plots in the house this day;
Too strong for the faithful, beyond medicining . . .
And help stands far away.

LEADER.

This warning I can read not, though I knew
That other tale. It rings the city through.

CASSANDRA.

O Woman, thou! The lord who lay with thee!
Wilt lave with water, and then . . . How speak the end?
It comes so quick. A hand . . . another hand . . .
That reach, reach gropingly . . .

LEADER.

I see not yet. These riddles, pierced with blind
Gleams of foreboding but bemuse my mind.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, ah! What is it? There; it is coming clear.
A net . . . some net of Hell.
Nay, she that lies with him . . . is she the snare?
And half of his blood upon it. It holds well . . .
O Crowd of ravening Voices, be glad, yea, shout
And cry for the stoning, cry for the casting out!

SECOND ELDER.

What Fury Voices call'st thou to be hot
Against this castle? Such words like me not.

And deep within my breast I felt that sick
And saffron drop, which creepeth to the heart
To die as the last rays of life depart.
Misfortune comes so quick.

CASSANDRA.

Ah, look! Look! Keep his mate from the Wild Bull!
 A tangle of raiment, see;
 A black horn, and a blow, and he falleth, full
 In the marble amid the water. I counsel ye.
 I speak plain. . . . Blood in the bath and treachery!

LEADER.

No great interpreter of oracles
 Am I; but this, I think, some mischief spells.

What spring of good hath seercraft ever made
 Up from the dark to flow?
 'Tis but a weaving of words, a craft of woe,
 To make mankind afraid.

CASSANDRA.

Poor woman! Poor dead woman! . . . Yea, it is I,
 Poured out like water among them. Weep for me. . . .
 Ah! What is this place? Why must I come with thee . . .
 To die, only to die?

LEADER.

Thou art borne on the breath of God, thou spirit wild,
 For thine own weird to wail,
 Like to that wingèd voice, that heart so sore
 Which, crying alway, hungereth to cry more,
 "Itylus, Itylus," till it sing her child
 Back to the nightingale.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, happy Singing Bird, so sweet, so clear!
 Soft wings for her God made,
 And an easy passing, without pain or tear . . .
 For me 'twill be torn flesh and rending blade.

SECOND ELDER.

Whence is it sprung, whence wafted on God's breath,
 This anguish reasonless?

This throbbing of terror shaped to melody,
 Moaning of evil blent with music high?
 Who hath marked out for thee that mystic path
 Through thy woe's wilderness?

CASSANDRA.

Alas for the kiss, the kiss of Paris, his people's bane!
 Alas for Scamander Water, the water my fathers drank!
 Long, long ago, I played about thy bank,
 And was cherished and grew strong;
 Now by a River of Wailing, by shores of Pain,
 Soon shall I make my song.

LEADER.

How sayst thou? All too clear,
 This ill word thou hast laid upon thy mouth!
 A babe could read thee plain.
 It stabs within me like a serpent's tooth,
 The bitter thrilling music of her pain:
 I marvel as I hear.

CASSANDRA.

Alas for the toil, the toil of a City, worn unto death!
 Alas for my father's worship before the citadel,
 The flocks that bled and the tumult of their breath!
 But no help from them came
 To save Troy Towers from falling as they fell! . . .
 And I on the earth shall writhe, my heart aflame.

SECOND ELDER.

Dark upon dark, new ominous words of ill!
 Sure there hath swept on thee some Evil Thing,
 Crushing, which makes thee bleed
 And in the torment of thy vision sing
 These plaining death-fraught oracles . . . Yet still, still,
 Their end I cannot read!

CASSANDRA.

[*By an effort she regains mastery of herself, and speaks
 directly to the Leader.*]

Fore God, mine oracle shall no more hide
 With veils his visage, like a new-wed bride!
 A shining wind out of this dark shall blow,
 Piercing the dawn, growing as great waves grow,
 To burst in the heart of sunrise . . . stronger far
 Than this poor pain of mine. I will not mar
 With mists my wisdom.

Be near me as I go,
 Tracking the evil things of long ago,
 And bear me witness. For this roof, there clings
 Music about it, like a choir which sings
 One-voiced, but not well-sounding, for not good
 The words are. Drunken, drunken, and with blood,
 To make them dare the more, a revelling rout
 Is in the rooms, which no man shall cast out,
 Of sister Furies. And they weave to song,
 Haunting the House, its first blind deed of wrong,
 Spurning in turn that King's bed desecrate,
 Defiled, which paid a brother's sin with hate. . . .

Hath it missed or struck, mine arrow? Am I a poor
 Dreamer, that begs and babbles at the door?
 Give first thine oath in witness, that I know
 Of this great dome the sins wrought long ago.

ELDER.

And how should oath of mine, though bravely sworn,
 Appease thee? Yet I marvel that one born
 Far over seas, of alien speech, should fall
 So apt, as though she had lived here and seen all.

CASSANDRA.

The Seer Apollo made me too to see.

ELDER (*in a low voice*).

Was the God's heart pierced with desire for thee?

CASSANDRA.

Time was. I held it shame hereof to speak.

ELDER.

Ah, shame is for the mighty, not the weak.

CASSANDRA.

We wrestled, and his breath to me was sweet.

ELDER.

Ye came to the getting of children, as is meet?

CASSANDRA.

I swore to Loxias, and I swore a lie.

ELDER.

Already thine the gift of prophecy?

CASSANDRA.

Already I showed my people all their path.

ELDER.

And Loxias did not smite thee in his wrath?

CASSANDRA.

After that sin . . . no man believed me more.

ELDER.

Nay, then, to us thy wisdom seemeth sure.

CASSANDRA.

Oh, oh! Agony, agony!

Again the awful pains of prophecy

Are on me, maddening as they fall. . . .

Ye see them there . . . beating against the wall?

So young . . . like shapes that gather in a dream . . .

Slain by a hand they loved. Children they seem,

Murdered . . . and in their hands they bear baked meat:

I think it is themselves. Yea, flesh; I see it;

And inward parts. . . . Oh, what a horrible load

To carry! And their father drank their blood.

From these, I warn ye, vengeance broodeth still,

A lion's rage, which goes not forth to kill

But lurketh in his lair, watching the high
Hall of my war-gone master . . . Master? Aye;
Mine, mine! The yoke is nailed about my neck. . . .
Oh, lord of ships and trampler on the wreck
Of Ilion, knows he not this she-wolf's tongue,
Which licks and fawns, and laughs with ear up-sprung,
To bite in the end like a secret death?—and can
The woman? Slay a strong and armed man? . . .

What fangèd reptile like to her doth creep?
Some serpent amphisbene, some Skylla, deep
Housed in the rock, where sailors shriek and die,
Mother of Hell blood-raging, which doth cry
On her own flesh war, war without alloy . . .
God! And she shouted in his face her joy,
Like men in battle when the foe doth break.
And feigns thanksgiving for his safety's sake!

What if no man believe me? 'Tis all one.
The thing which must be shall be; aye, and soon
Thou too shalt sorrow for these things, and here
Standing confess me all too true a seer.

LEADER.

The Thyestean feast of children slain
I understood, and tremble. Aye, my brain
Reels at these visions, beyond guesswork true.
But after, though I heard, I had lost the clue.

CASSANDRA.

Man, thou shalt look on Agamemnon dead.

LEADER.

Peace, Mouth of Evil! Be those words unsaid!

CASSANDRA.

No god of peace hath watch upon that hour.

LEADER.

If it must come. Forefend it, Heavenly Power!

CASSANDRA.

They do not think of prayer; they think of death.

LEADER.

They? Say, what man this foul deed compasseth?

CASSANDRA.

Alas, thou art indeed fallen far astray!

LEADER.

How could such deed be done? I see no way.

CASSANDRA.

Yet know I not the Greek tongue all too well?

LEADER.

Greek are the Delphic dooms, but hard to spell.

CASSANDRA.

Ah! Ah! There!

What a strange fire! It moves . . . It comes at me.

O Wolf Apollo, mercy! O agony! . . .

Why lies she with a wolf, this lioness lone,

Two-handed, when the royal lion is gone?

God, she will kill me! Like to them that brew

Poison, I see her mingle for me too

A separate vial in her wrath, and swear,

Whetting her blade for him, that I must share

His death . . . because, because he hath dragged me here!

Oh, why these mockers at my throat? This gear

Of wreathèd bands, this staff of prophecy?

I mean to kill you first, before I die.

Begone!

*[She tears off her prophetic habiliments; and presently
throws them on the ground, and stamps on them.]*

Down to perdition! . . . Lie ye so?

So I requite you! Now make rich in woe

Some other Bird of Evil, me no more!

[Coming to herself.]

Ah, see! It is Apollo's self, hath tore
His crown from me! Who watched me long ago
In this same prophet's robe, by friend, by foe,
All with one voice, all blinded, mocked to scorn:
"A thing of dreams," "a beggar-maid outworn,"
Poor, starving and reviled, I endured all;
And now the Seer, who called me till my call
Was perfect, leads me to this last dismay. . . .
'Tis not the altar-stone where men did slay
My father; 'tis a block, a block with gore
Yet hot, that waits me, of one slain before.

Yet not of God unheeded shall we lie.
There cometh after, one who lifteth high
The downfallen; a branch where blossometh
A sire's avenging and a mother's death.
Exiled and wandering, from this land outcast,
One day He shall return, and set the last
Crown on these sins that have his house downtrod.
For, lo, there is a great oath sworn of God,
His father's upturned face shall guide him home.

Why should I grieve? Why pity these men's doom?
I who have seen the City of Ilion
Pass as she passed; and they who cast her down
Have thus their end, as God gives judgment sure. . . .

I go to drink my cup. I will endure
To die. O Gates, Death-Gates, all hail to you!
Only, pray God the blow be stricken true!
Pray God, unagonized, with blood that flows
Quick unto friendly death, these eyes may close!

LEADER.

O full of sorrows, full of wisdom great,
Woman, thy speech is a long anguish; yet,
Knowing thy doom, why walkst thou with clear eyes,
Like some god-blinded beast, to sacrifice?

CASSANDRA.

There is no escape, friends; only vain delay.

LEADER.

Is not the later still the sweeter day?

CASSANDRA.

The day is come. Small profit now to fly.

LEADER.

Through all thy griefs, Woman, thy heart is high.

CASSANDRA.

Alas! None that is happy hears that praise.

LEADER.

Are not the brave dead blest in after days?

CASSANDRA.

O Father! O my brethren brave, I come!

[She moves towards the House, but recoils shuddering.]

LEADER.

What frights thee? What is that thou startest from?

CASSANDRA.

Ah, faugh! Faugh!

LEADER.

What turns thee in that blind
Horror? Unless some loathing of the mind . . .

CASSANDRA.

Death drifting from the doors, and blood like rain!

LEADER.

'Tis but the dumb beasts at the altar slain.

CASSANDRA.

And vapours from a charnel-house . . . See there!

LEADER.

'Tis Tyrian incense clouding in the air.

CASSANDRA (*recovering herself again*).

So be it!—I will go, in yonder room
To weep mine own and Agamemnon's doom.
May death be all! Strangers, I am no bird
That pipeth trembling at a thicket stirred
By the empty wind. Bear witness on that day
When woman for this woman's life shall pay,
And man for man ill-mated low shall lie:
I ask this boon, as being about to die.

LEADER.

Alas, I pity thee thy mystic fate!

CASSANDRA.

One word, one dirge-song would I utter yet
O'er mine own corpse. To this last shining Sun
I pray that, when the Avenger's work is done,
His enemies may remember this thing too,
This little thing, the woman slave they slew!
O world of men, farewell! A painted show
Is all thy glory; and when life is low
The touch of a wet sponge out-blotteth all.
Oh, sadder this than any proud man's fall!

[*She goes into the House.*]

CHORUS.

Great Fortune is an hungry thing,
And filleth no heart anywhere,
Though men with fingers menacing
Point at the great house, none will dare,
When Fortune knocks, to bar the door
Proclaiming: "Come thou here no more!"
Lo, to this man the Gods have given
Great Ilion in the dust to tread
And home return, emblazed of heaven;
If it is writ, he too shall go
Through blood for blood spilt long ago;
If he too, dying for the dead,

Should crown the deaths of alien years,
What mortal afar off, who hears,
Shall boast him Fortune's Child, and led
Above the eternal tide of tears?

[*A sudden Cry from within.*]

VOICE.

Ho! Treason in the house! I am wounded: slain.

LEADER.

Hush! In the castle! 'Twas a cry
Of some man wounded mortally.

VOICE.

Ah God, another! I am stricken again.

LEADER.

I think the deed is done. It was the King
Who groaned. . . . Stand close, and think if anything . . .
[*The Old Men gather together under the shock, and de-
bate confusedly.*]

ELDER B.

I give you straight my judgment. Summon all
The citizens to rescue. Sound a call!

ELDER C.

No, no! Burst in at once without a word!
In, and convict them by their dripping sword!

ELDER D.

Yes; that or something like it. Quick, I say,
Be doing! 'Tis a time for no delay.

ELDER E.

We have time to think. This opening . . . They have planned
Some scheme to make enslavement of the land.

ELDER F.

Yes, while we linger here! They take no thought
Of lingering, and their sword-arm sleepeth not!

ELDER G.

I have no counsel. I can speak not. Oh,
Let him give counsel who can strike a blow!

ELDER H.

I say as this man says. I have no trust
In words to raise a dead man from the dust.

ELDER I.

How mean you? Drag out our poor lives, and stand
Cowering to these defilers of the land?

ELDER J.

Nay, 'tis too much! Better to strive and die!
Death is an easier doom than slavery.

ELDER K.

We heard a sound of groaning, nothing plain,
How know we—are we seers?—that one is slain?

ELDER L.

Oh, let us find the truth out, ere we grow
Thus passionate! To surmise is not to know.

LEADER.

Break in, then! 'Tis the counsel ye all bring,
And learn for sure, how is it with the King.

[They cluster up towards the Palace Door, as though to force an entrance, when the great Door swings open, revealing CLYTEMNESTRA, who stands, axe in hand, over the dead bodies of AGAMEMNON and CASSANDRA. The body of AGAMEMNON is wrapped in a rich crimson web. There is blood on CLYTEMNESTRA'S brow, and she speaks in wild triumph.]

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Oh, lies enough and more have I this day
Spoken, which now I shame not to unsay.
How should a woman work, to the utter end.

Hate on a damnèd hater, feigned a friend;
 How pile perdition round him, hunter-wise,
 Too high for overleaping, save by lies?
 To me this hour was dreamed of long ago;
 A thing of ancient hate. 'Twas very slow
 In coming, but it came. And here I stand
 Even where I struck, with all the deed I planned
 Done! 'Twas so wrought—what boots it to deny?—
 The man could neither guard himself nor fly.
 An endless web, as by some fisher strung,
 A deadly plenteousness of robe, I flung
 All round him, and struck twice; and with two cries
 His limbs turned water and broke; and as he lies
 I cast my third stroke in, a prayer well-spèd
 To Zeus of Hell, who guardeth safe his dead!
 So there he gasped his life out as he lay;
 And, gasping, the blood spouted . . . Like dark spray
 That splashed, it came, a salt and deathly dew;
 Sweet, sweet as God's dear rain-drops ever blew
 O'er a parched field, the day the buds are born! . . .

Which things being so, ye Councillors high-born,
 Depart in joy, if joy ye will. For me,
 I glory. Oh, if such a thing might be
 As o'er the dead thank-offering to outpour,
 On this dead it were just, aye, just and more,
 Who filled the cup of the House with treacheries
 Curse-fraught, and here hath drunk it to the lees!

LEADER.

We are astonished at thy speech. To fling,
 Wild mouth! such vaunt over thy murdered King!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Wouldst fright me, like a witless woman? Lo,
 This bosom shakes not. And, though well ye know,
 I tell you . . . Curse me as ye will, or bless,
 'Tis all one . . . This is Agamemnon; this,
 My husband, dead by my right hand, a blow
 Struck by a righteous craftsman. Aye, 'tis so.

CHORUS.

Woman, what evil tree,
 What poison grown of the ground
 Or draught of the drifting sea
 Way to thy lips hath found,
 Making thee clothe thy heart
 In rage, yea, in curses burning
 When thine own people pray?
 Thou hast hewn, thou hast cast away;
 And a thing cast away thou art,
 A thing of hate and a spurning!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, now, for me, thou hast thy words of fate;
 Exile from Argos and the people's hate
 For ever! Against him no word was cried,
 When, recking not, as 'twere a beast that died,
 With flocks abounding o'er his wide domain,
 He slew his child, my love, my flower of pain, . . .
 Great God, as magic for the winds of Thrace!
 Why was not he man-hunted from his place,
 To purge the blood that stained him? . . . When the deed
 Is mine, oh, then thou art a judge indeed!
 But threat thy fill. I am ready, and I stand
 Content; if thy hand beateth down my hand,
 Thou rulest. If aught else be God's decree,
 Thy lesson shall be learned, though late it be.

CHORUS.

Thy thought, it is very proud;
 Thy breath is the scorner's breath;
 Is not the madness loud
 In thy heart, being drunk with death?
 Yea, and above thy brow
 A star of the wet blood burneth!
 Oh, doom shall have yet her day,
 The last friend cast away,
 When lie doth answer lie
 And a stab for a stab returneth!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And heark what Oath-gods gather to my side!
 By my dead child's Revenge, now satisfied,
 By Mortal Blindness, by all Powers of Hell
 Which Hate, to whom in sacrifice he fell,
 My Hope shall walk not in the house of Fear,
 While on my hearth one fire yet burneth clear,
 One lover, one Aigisthos, as of old!

What should I fear, when fallen here I hold
 This foe, this scorner of his wife, this toy
 And fool of each Chryseïs under Troy;
 And there withal his soothsayer and slave,
 His chanting bed-fellow, his leman brave,
 Who rubbed the galleys' benches at his side?
 But, oh, they had their guerdon as they died!
 For he lies thus, and she, the wild swan's way,
 Hath trod her last long weeping roundelay,
 And lies, his lover, ravisht o'er the main
 For his bed's comfort and my deep disdain.

CHORUS.

(Some Elders.)

Would God that suddenly
 With no great agony,
 No long sick-watch to keep,
 My hour would come to me,
 My hour, and presently
 Bring the eternal, the
 Unwaking sleep,
 Now that my Shepherd, he
 Whose love watched over me,
 Lies in the deep!

ANOTHER.

For woman's sake he endured and battled well,
 And by a woman's hand he fell.

OTHERS.

What hast thou done, O Helen blind of brain,
O face that slew the souls on Ilion's plain,
One face, one face, and many a thousand slain?

The hate of old that on this castle lay,
Builided in lust, a husband's evil day,
Hath bloomed for thee a perfect flower again
And unforgotten, an old and burning stain
Never to pass away.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, pray not for the hour of death, being tried
Too sore beneath these blows
Neither on Helen turn thy wrath aside,
The Slayer of Men, the face which hath destroyed
Its thousand Danaan souls, and wrought a wide
Wound that no leech can close.

CHORUS.

—Daemon, whose heel is set
On the House and the twofold kin
Of the high Tantalidae,
A power, heavy as fate,
Thou wieldest through woman's sin,
Piercing the heart of me!

—Like a raven swoln with hate
He hath set on the dead his claw,
He croaketh a song to sate
His fury, and calls it Law!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ah, call upon Him! Yea, call—
And thy thought hath found its path—
The Daemon who haunts this hall,
The thrice-engorged Wrath;
From him is the ache of the flesh
For blood born and increased;
Ere the old sore hath ceased
It oozeth afresh.

CHORUS.

—Indeed He is very great,
 And heavy his anger, He,
 The Daemon who guides the fate
 Of the old Tantalidae:
 Alas, alas, an evil tale ye tell
 Of desolate angers and insatiable!

—Ah me,
 And yet 'tis all as Zeus hath willed,
 Doer of all and Cause of all;
 By His Word every chance doth fall,
 No end without Him is fulfilled;
 What of these things
 But cometh by high Heaven's counsellings?

*[A band of Mourners has gathered
 within the House.]*

MOURNERS.

Ah, sorrow, sorrow! My King, my King!
 How shall I weep, what word shall I say?
 Caught in the web of this spider thing,
 In foul death gasping thy life away!
 Woe's me, woe's me, for this slavish lying,
 The doom of craft and the lonely dying,
 The iron two-edged and the hands that slay!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And criest thou still this deed hath been
 My work? Nay, gaze, and have no thought
 That this is Agamemnon's Queen.
 'Tis He, 'tis He, hath round him wrought
 This phantom of the dead man's wife;
 He, the old Wrath, the Driver of Men astray,
 Pursuer of Atreus for the feast defiled;
 To assoil an ancient debt he hath paid this life;
 A warrior and a crownèd King this day
 Atones for a slain child.

CHORUS.

- That thou art innocent herein,
 What tongue dare boast? It cannot be,
 Yet from the deeps of ancient sin
 The Avenger may have wrought with thee.
- On the red Slayer crasheth, groping wild
 For blood, more blood, to build his peace again,
 And wash like water the old frozen stain
 Of the torn child.

MOURNERS.

Ah, sorrow, sorrow! My King, my King!
 How shall I weep, what word shall I say?
 Caught in the web of this spider thing,
 In foul death gasping thy life away.
 Woe's me, woe's me, for this slavish lying,
 The doom of craft and the lonely dying,
 The iron two-edged and the hands that slay!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

And what of the doom of craft that first
 He planted, making the House accurst?
 What of the blossom from this root riven,
 Iphigenia, the unforgiven?
 Even as the wrong was, so is the pain:
 He shall not laugh in the House of the slain,
 When the count is scored;
 He hath but spoilèd and paid again
 The due of the sword.

CHORUS.

I am lost; my mind dull-eyed
 Knows not nor feels
 Whither to fly nor hide
 While the House reels.
 The noise of rain that falls
 On the roof affrighteth me,
 Washing away the walls;
 Rain that falls bloodily.

Doth ever the sound abate?
 Lo, the next Hour of Fate
 Whetting her vengeance due
 On new whet-stones, for new
 Workings of hate.

MOURNERS.

Would thou hadst covered me, Earth, O Earth,
 Or e'er I had looked on my lord thus low,
 In the pallèd marble of silvern girth!
 What hands may shroud him, what tears may flow?
 Not thine, O Woman who dared to slay him,
 Thou durst not weep to him now, nor pray him,
 Nor pay to his soul the deep unworth
 Of gift or prayer to forget thy blow.
 —Oh, who with heart sincere
 Shall bring praise or grief
 To lay on the sepulchre
 Of the great chief?

CLYTEMNESTRA.

His burial is not thine to array.
 By me he fell, by me he died,
 I watch him to the grave, not cried
 By mourners of his housefolk; nay,
 His own child for a day like this
 Waits, as is seemly, and shall run
 By the white waves of Acheron
 To fold him in her arms and kiss!

CHORUS.

Lo, she who was erst reviled
 Revileth: and what is true?
 Spoil taken from them that spoiled,
 Life-blood from them that slew!
 Surely while God ensueth
 His laws, while Time doth run

'Tis written: On him that doeth
 It shall be done.
 This is God's law and grace,
 Who then shall hunt the race
 Of curses from out this hall?
 The House is sealed withal
 To dreadfulness.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Aye, thou hast found the Law, and stept
 In Truth's way.—Yet even now I call
 The Living Wrath which haunts this hall
 To truce and compact. I accept

All the affliction he doth heap
 Upon me, and I charge him go
 Far off with his self-murdering woe
 To strange men's houses. I will keep

Some little dower, and leave behind
 All else, contented utterly.
 I have swept the madness from the sky
 Wherein these brethren slew their kind.

[*As she ceases, exhausted and with the fire gone out of her, AIGISTHOS, with Attendants, bursts triumphantly in.*]

AIGISTHOS.

O shining day, O dawn of righteousness
 Fulfilled! Now, now indeed will I confess
 That divine watchers o'er man's death and birth
 Look down on all the anguish of the earth,
 Now that I see him lying, as I love
 To see him, in this net the Furies wove,
 To atone the old craft of his father's hand.

For Atreus, this man's father, in this land
 Reigning, and by Thyestes in his throne
 Challenged—he was his brother and mine own

Father—from home and city cast him out;
 And he, after long exile, turned about
 And threw his suppliant on the hearth, and won
 Promise of so much mercy, that his own
 Life-blood should reek not in his father's hall.
 Then did that godless brother, Atreus, call,
 To greet my sire—More eagerness, O God,
 Was there than love!—a feast of brotherhood.
 And, feigning joyous banquet, laid as meat
 Before him his dead children. The white feet
 And finger-fringed hands apart he set,
 Veiled from all seeing, and made separate
 The tables. And he straightway, knowing naught,
 Took of those bodies, eating that which wrought
 No health for all his race. And when he knew
 The unnatural deed, back from the board he threw,
 Spewing that murderous gorge, and spurning brake
 The table, to make strong the curse he spake:
 “Thus perish all of Pleisthenês begot!”

For that lies this man here; and all the plot
 Is mine, most righteously. For me, the third,
 When butchering my two brethren, Atreus spared
 And cast me with my broken sire that day,
 A little thing in swaddling clothes, away
 To exile; where I grew, and at the last
 Justice hath brought me home! Yea, though outcast
 In a far land, mine arm hath reached this king;
 My brain, my hate, wrought all the counselling;
 And all is well. I have seen mine enemy
 Dead in the snare, and care not if I die!

LEADER.

Aigisthos, to insult over the dead
 I like not. All the counsel, thou hast said,
 Was thine alone; and thine the will that spilled
 This piteous blood. As justice is fulfilled,
 Thou shalt not 'scape—so my heart presageth—
 The day of cursing and the hurlèd death.

AIGISTHOS.

How, thou poor oarsman of the nether row,
 When the main deck is master? Sayst thou so? . . .
 To such old heads the lesson may prove hard,
 I fear me, when Obedience is the word.
 But hunger, and bonds, and cold, help men to find
 Their wits.—They are wondrous healers of the mind!
 Hast eyes and seest not this?—Against a spike
 Kick not, for fear it pain thee if thou strike.

LEADER.

(turning from him to Clytemnestra).

Woman! A soldier fresh from war! To keep
 Watch o'er his house and shame him in his sleep . . .
 To plot this craft against a lord of spears . . .

[CLYTEMNESTRA, *as though in a dream, pays no heed.*
 AIGISTHOS *interrupts.*]

AIGISTHOS.

These be the words, old man, that lead to tears!
 Thou hast an opposite to Orpheus' tongue,
 Who chained all things with his enchanting song,
 For thy mad noise will put the chains on thee.
 Enough! Once mastered thou shalt tamer be.

LEADER.

Thou, master? Is old Argos so accurst?
 Thou plotter afar off, who never durst
 Raise thine own hand to affront and strike him down . . .

AIGISTHOS.

To entice him was the wife's work. I was known
 By all men here, his old confessed blood-foe.
 Howbeit, with his possessions I will know
 How to be King. And who obeys not me
 Shall be yoked hard, no easy trace-horse he,
 Corn-flushed. Hunger, and hunger's prison mate,
 The clammy murk, shall see his rage abate.

LEADER.

Thou craven soul! Why not in open strife
 Slay him? Why lay the blood-sin on his wife,
 Staining the Gods of Argos, making ill
 The soil thereof? . . . But young Orestes still
 Liveth. Oh, Fate will guide him home again,
 Avenging, conquering, home to kill these twain!

AIGISTHOS.

'Fore God, if 'tis your pleasure thus to speak and do, ye soon
 shall hear!
 Ho there, my trusty pikes, advance! There cometh business
 for the spear.
*[A body of Spearmen, from concealment outside, rush in
 and dominate the stage.]*

LEADER.

Ho there, ye Men of Argos! Up! Stand and be ready, sword
 from sheath!

AIGISTHOS.

By Heaven, I also, sword in hand, am ready, and refuse not
 death!

LEADER.

Come, find it! We accept thy word. Thou offerest what we
 hunger for.

*[Some of the Elders draw swords with the Leader; others
 have collapsed with weakness. Men from AGAMEM-
 NON'S retinue have gathered and prepare for battle,
 when, before they can come to blows, CLYTEMNESTRA
 breaks from her exhausted silence.]*

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Nay, peace, O best-belovèd! Peace! And let us work no evil
 more.
 Surely the reaping of the past is a full harvest, and not
 good,

And wounds enough are everywhere.—Let us not stain ourselves with blood.

Ye reverend Elders, go your ways, to his own dwelling every one,

Ere things be wrought for which men suffer.—What we did must needs be done.

And if of all these strifes we now may have no more, oh, I will kneel

And praise God, bruised though we be beneath the Daemon's heavy heel.

This is the word a woman speaks, to hear if any man will deign.

ΑΙΓΙΣΘΟΣ.

And who are these to burst in flower of folly thus of tongue and brain,

And utter words of empty sound and perilous, tempting Fortune's frown,

And leave wise counsel all forgot, and gird at him who wears the crown?

ΛΕΑΔΕΡ.

To cringe before a caitiff's crown, it squareth not with Argive ways.

ΑΙΓΙΣΘΟΣ.

(sheathing his sword and turning from them).

Bah, I will be a hand of wrath to fall on thee in after days.

ΛΕΑΔΕΡ.

Not so, if God in after days shall guide Orestes home again!

ΑΙΓΙΣΘΟΣ.

I know how men in exile feed on dreams . . . and know such food is vain.

ΛΕΑΔΕΡ.

Go forward and wax fat! Defile the right for this thy little hour!

AIGISTHOS.

I spare thee now. Know well for all this folly thou shalt feel
my power.

LEADER.

Aye, vaunt thy greatness, as a bird beside his mate doth
vaunt and swell.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Vain hounds are baying round thee; oh, forget them! Thou
and I shall dwell

As Kings in this great House. We two at last will order all
things well.

*[The Elders and the remains of AGAMEMNON'S retinue
retire sullenly, leaving the Spear-men in possession.]*

CLYTEMNESTRA and AIGISTHOS turn and enter the
Palace.]

OEDIPUS, KING OF THEBES

(c. 425 B.C.)

by

SOPHOCLES

Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray

Copyright by Oxford University Press,
American Branch,
and reprinted by special permission
of the Translator and the Publishers.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

OEDIPUS, supposed son of Polybus, King of Corinth; now elected King of Thebes.

JOCASTA, Queen of Thebes; widow of Laius, the late King, and now wife to Oedipus.

CREON, a Prince of Thebes, brother to Jocasta.

TIRESIAS, an old blind seer.

PRIEST of ZEUS.

A STRANGER from Corinth.

A SHEPHERD of King Laius.

A MESSENGER from the Palace.

CHORUS of the Elders of Thebes.

A Crowd of Suppliants, men, women, and children.

The following do not appear in the play but are frequently mentioned:—

LAÏUS (pronounced as three syllables, Lá-i-us), the last King of Thebes before Oedipus.

CADMUS, the founder of Thebes; son of Agénor, King of Sidon.

POLYBUS AND MEROPÊ, King and Queen of Corinth, supposed to be the father and mother of Oedipus.

APOLLO, the God specially presiding over the oracle of Delphi and the island Delos: he is also called PHOEBUS, the pure; LOXIAS, supposed to mean "He of the Crooked Words"; and LYKEIOS, supposed to mean "Wolf-God." He is also the great averter of Evil, and has names from the cries "I-ê" (pronounced "Ee-ay") and "Paian," cries for healing or for the frightening away of evil influences.

KITHAIRON is a mass of wild mountain south-west of Thebes.

ARGUMENT

While Thebes was under the rule of LAÏUS and JOCASTA there appeared a strange and monstrous creature, "the riddling Sphinx," "the She-Wolf of the woven song," who in some unexplained way sang riddles of death and slew the people of Thebes. LAÏUS went to ask aid of the oracle of Delphi, but was slain mysteriously on the road. Soon afterwards there came to Thebes a young Prince of Corinth, OEDIPUS, who had left his home and was wandering. He faced the Sphinx and read her riddle, whereupon she flung herself from her rock and died. The throne being vacant was offered to OEDIPUS, and with it the hand of the Queen, JOCASTA.

Some ten or twelve years afterwards a pestilence has fallen on Thebes. At this point the play begins.

OEDIPUS, KING OF THEBES

SCENE.—*Before the Palace of OEDIPUS at Thebes. A crowd of suppliants of all ages are waiting by the altar in front and on the steps of the Palace; among them the PRIEST of ZEUS. As the Palace door opens and OEDIPUS comes out all the suppliants with a cry move towards him in attitudes of prayer, holding out their olive branches, and then become still again as he speaks.*

OEDIPUS.

My children, fruit of Cadmus' ancient tree
New springing, wherefore thus with bended knee
Press ye upon us, laden all with wreaths
And suppliant branches? And the city breathes
Heavy with incense, heavy with dim prayer
And shrieks to affright the Slayer.—Children, care
For this so moves me, I have scorned withal
Message or writing: seeing 'tis I ye call,
'Tis I am come, world-honoured Oedipus.

Old Man, do thou declare—the rest have thus
Their champion—in what mood stand ye so still,
In dread or sure hope? Know ye not, my will
Is yours for aid 'gainst all? Stern were indeed
The heart that felt not for so dire a need.

PRIEST.

O Oedipus, who holdest in thy hand
My city, thou canst see what ages stand
At these thine altars; some whose little wing
Scarce fieth yet, and some with long living
O'erburdened; priests, as I of Zeus am priest,
And chosen youths: and wailing hath not ceased

Of thousands in the market-place, and by
Athena's two-fold temples and the dry
Ash of Ismênus' portent-breathing shore.

For all our ship, thou see'st, is weak and sore
Shaken with storms, and no more lighteneth
Her head above the waves whose trough is death.
She wasteth in the fruitless buds of earth,
In parchèd herds and travail without birth
Of dying women: yea, and midst of it
A burning and a loathy god hath lit
Sudden, and sweeps our land, this Plague of power;
Till Cadmus' house grows empty, hour by hour,
And Hell's house rich with steam of tears and blood.

O King, not God indeed nor peer to God
We deem thee, that we kneel before thine hearth,
Children and old men, praying; but of earth
A thing consummate by thy star confessed
Thou walkest and by converse with the blest;
Who came to Thebes so swift, and swept away
The Sphinx's song, the tribute of dismay,
That all were bowed beneath, and made us free.
A stranger, thou, naught knowing more than we,
Nor taught of any man, but by God's breath
Filled, thou didst raise our life. So the world saith;
So we say.

Therefore now, O Lord and Chief,
We come to thee again; we lay our grief
On thy head, if thou find us not some aid.
Perchance thou hast heard Gods talking in the shade
Of night, or eke some man: to him that knows,
Men say, each chance that falls, each wind that blows
Hath life, when he seeks counsel. Up, O chief
Of men, and lift thy city from its grief;
Face thine own peril! All our land doth hold
Thee still our saviour, for that help of old:
Shall they that tell of thee hereafter tell
"By him was Thebes raised up, and after fell!"
Nay, lift us till we slip no more. Oh, let

That bird of old that made us fortunate
Wing back; be thou our Oedipus again.
And let thy kingdom be a land of men,
Not emptiness. Walls, towers, and ships, they all
Are nothing with no men to keep the wall.

OEDIPUS.

My poor, poor children! Surely long ago
I have read your trouble. Stricken, well I know,
Ye all are, stricken sore: yet verily
Not one so stricken to the heart as I.
Your grief, it cometh to each man apart
For his own loss, none other's; but this heart
For thee and me and all of us doth weep.
Wherefore it is not to one sunk in sleep
Ye come with waking. Many tears these days
For your sake I have wept, and many ways
Have wandered on the beating wings of thought.
And, finding but one hope, that I have sought
And followed. I have sent Menoikeus' son,
Creon, my own wife's brother, forth alone
To Apollo's House in Delphi, there to ask
What word, what deed of mine, what bitter task,
May save my city.

And the lapse of days
Reckoned, I can but marvel what delays
His journey. 'Tis beyond all thought that thus
He comes not, beyond need. But when he does,
Then call me false and traitor, if I flee
Back from whatever task God sheweth me.

PRIEST.

At point of time thou speakest. Mark the cheer
Yonder. Is that not Creon drawing near?

[*They all crowd to gaze where CREON is approaching in the distance.*]

OEDIPUS.

O Lord Apollo, help! And be the star
That guides him joyous as his seemings are!

PRIEST.

Oh! surely joyous! How else should he bear
That fruited laurel wreathed about his hair?

OEDIPUS.

We soon shall know.—'Tis not too far for one
Clear-voiced.

(*Shouting*) Ho, brother! Prince! Menoikeus' son,
What message from the God?

CREON (*from a distance*).

Message of joy!

[*Enter CREON.*]

I tell thee, what is now our worst annoy,
If the right deed be done, shall turn to good.

[*The crowd, which has been full of excited hope, falls to
doubt and disappointment.*]

OEDIPUS.

Nay, but what is the message? For my blood
Runs neither hot nor cold for words like those.

CREON.

Shall I speak now, with all these pressing close,
Or pass within?—To me both ways are fair.

OEDIPUS.

Speak forth to all! The grief that these men bear
Is more than any fear for mine own death.

CREON.

I speak then what I heard from God.—Thus saith
Phoebus, our Lord and Seer, in clear command.
An unclean thing there is, hid in our land,
Eating the soil thereof: this ye shall cast
Out, and not foster till all help be past.

OEDIPUS.

How cast it out? What was the evil deed?

CREON.

Hunt the men out from Thebes, or make them bleed
Who slew. For blood it is that stirs to-day.

OEDIPUS.

Who was the man they killed? Doth Phoebus say?

CREON.

O King, there was of old King Laius
In Thebes, ere thou didst come to pilot us.

OEDIPUS.

I know: not that I ever saw his face.

CREON.

'Twas he. And Loxias now bids us trace
And smite the unknown workers of his fall.

OEDIPUS.

Where in God's earth are they? Or how withal
Find the blurred trail of such an ancient stain?

CREON.

In Thebes, he said.—That which men seek amain
They find. 'Tis things forgotten that go by.

OEDIPUS.

And where did Laius meet them? Did he die
In Thebes, or in the hills, or some far land?

CREON.

To ask God's will in Delphi he had planned
His journey. Started and returned no more.

OEDIPUS.

And came there nothing back? No message, nor
None of his company, that ye might hear?

CREON.

They all were slain, save one man; blind with fear
He came, remembering naught—or almost naught.

OEDIPUS.

And what was that? One thing has often brought
Others, could we but catch one little cue.

CREON.

'Twas not one man, 'twas robbers—that he knew—
Who barred the road and slew him: a great band.

OEDIPUS.

Robbers? . . . What robber, save the work was planned
By treason here, would dare a risk so plain?

CREON.

So some men thought. But Laius lay slain,
And none to avenge him in his evil day.

OEDIPUS.

And what strange mischief, when your master lay
Thus fallen, held you back from search and deed?

CREON.

The dark-songed Sphinx was here. We had no heed
Of distant sorrows, having death so near.

OEDIPUS.

It falls on me then. I will search and clear
This darkness.—Well hath Phoebus done, and thou
Too, to recall that dead king, even now,
And with you for the right I also stand,
To obey the God and succour this dear land.
Nor is it as for one that touches me
Far off; 'tis for mine own sake I must see
This sin cast out. Whoe'er it was that slew
Laius, the same wild hand may seek me too:
And caring thus for Laius, is but care
For mine own blood.—Up! Leave this altar-stair,
Children. Take from it every suppliant bough.
Then call the folk of Thebes. Say, 'tis my vow
To uphold them to the end. So God shall crown
Our greatness, or for ever cast us down.

[*He goes in to the Palace.*]

PRIEST.

My children, rise.—The King most lovingly
 Hath promised all we came for. And may He
 Who sent this answer, Phoebus, come confessed
 Helper to Thebes, and strong to stay the pest.

*[The suppliants gather up their boughs and stand
 at the side. The chorus of Theban elders enter.]*

CHORUS.

*[They speak of the Oracle which they have not yet
 heard, and cry to APOLLO by his special cry "I-ê."]*

A Voice, a Voice, that is borne on the Holy Way!

What art thou, O Heavenly One, O Word of the Houses of
 Gold?

Thebes is bright with thee, and my heart it leapeth; yet is it
 cold,

And my spirit faints as I pray.

I-ê! I-ê!

What task, O Affrighter of Evil, what task shall thy people
 essay?

One new as our new-come affliction,

Or an old toil returned with the years?

Unveil thee, thou dread benediction,

Hope's daughter and Fear's.

[They pray to ATHENA, ARTEMIS, and APOLLO.]

Zeus-Child that knowest not death, to thee I pray,

O Pallas; next to thy Sister, who calleth Thebes her own,

Artemis, named of Fair Voices, who sitteth her orbèd throne

In the throng of the market way:

And I-ê! I-ê!

Apollo, the Pure, the Far-smiter; O Three that keep evil
 away,

If of old for our city's desire,

When the death-cloud hung close to her brow,

Ye have banished the wound and the fire,

Oh! come to us now!

[They tell of the Pestilence.]

Wounds beyond telling; my people sick unto death;
And where is the counsellor, where is the sword of thought?
And Holy Earth in her increase perisheth:
The child dies and the mother awaketh not.

I-ê! I-ê!

We have seen them, one on another, gone as a bird is gone,
Souls that are flame; yea, higher,
Swifter they pass than fire,
To the rocks of the dying Sun.

[*They end with a prayer to ATHENA.*]

Their city wasteth unnumbered; their children lie
Where death hath cast them, unpitied, unwept upon.
The altars stand, as in seas of storm a high
Rock standeth, and wives and mothers grey thereon
Weep, weep and pray.

Lo, joy-cries to fright the Destroyer; a flash in the dark
they rise,
Then die by the sobs overladen.
Send help, O heaven-born Maiden,
Let us look on the light of her eyes!

[*To ZEUS, that he drive out the Slayer.*]

And Ares, the abhorred
Slayer, who bears no sword,
But shrieking, wrapped in fire, stands over me,
Make that he turn, yea, fly
Broken, wind-wasted, high
Down the vexed hollow of the Vaster Sea;
Or back to his own Thrace,
To harbour shelterless.
Where Night hath spared, he bringeth end by day.
Him, Him, O thou whose hand
Beareth the lightning brand,
O Father Zeus, now with thy thunder, slay and slay!

[*To APOLLO, ARTEMIS and DIONYSUS.*]

Where is thy gold-strung bow,
O Wolf-god, where the flow

Of living shafts unconquered, from all ills
 Our helpers? Where the white
 Spears of thy Sister's light,
 Far-flashing as she walks the wolf-wild hills?
 And thou, O Golden-crown,
 Theban and named our own,
 O Wine-gleam, Voice of Joy, for ever more
 Ringed with thy Maenads white,
 Bacchus, draw near and smite,
 Smite with thy glad-eyed flame the God whom Gods abhor.
[During the last lines OEDIPUS has come out from the Palace.]

OEDIPUS.

Thou prayest: but my words if thou wilt hear
 And bow thee to their judgement, strength is near
 For help, and a great lightening of ill.
 Thereof I come to speak, a stranger still
 To all this tale, a stranger to the deed:
 (Else, save that I were clueless, little need
 Had I to cast my net so wide and far:)
 Howbeit, I, being now as all ye are,
 A Theban, to all Thebans high and low
 Do make proclaim: if any here doth know
 By what man's hand died Laius, your King,
 Labdacus' son. I charge him that he bring
 To me his knowledge. Let him feel no fear
 If on a townsman's body he must clear
 Our guilt: the man shall suffer no great ill.
 But pass from Thebes, and live where else he will.

[No answer.]

Is it some alien from an alien shore
 Ye know to have done the deed, screen him no more!
 Good guerdon waits you now and a King's love
 Hereafter.

Hah! If still ye will not move
 But, fearing for yourselves or some near friend,
 Reject my charge, then hearken to what end

Ye drive me.—If in this place men there be
Who know and speak not, lo, I make decree
That, while in Thebes I bear the diadem,
No man shall greet, no man shall shelter them,
Nor give them water in their thirst, nor share
In sacrifice nor shrift nor dying prayer,
But thrust them from our doors, the thing they hide
Being this land's curse. Thus hath the God replied
This day to me from Delphi, and my sword
I draw thus for the dead and for God's word.

And lastly for the murderer, be it one
Hiding alone or more in unison,
I speak on him this curse: even as his soul
Is foul within him let his days be foul,
And life unfriended grind him till he die.
More: if he ever tread my hearth and I
Know it, be every curse upon my head
That I have spoke this day.

All I have said

I charge ye strictly to fulfil and make
Perfect, for my sake, for Apollo's sake,
And this land's sake, deserted of her fruit
And cast out from her gods. Nay, were all mute
At Delphi, still 'twere strange to leave the thing
Unfollowed, when a true man and a King
Lay murdered. All should search. But I, as now
Our fortunes fall—his crown is on my brow,
His wife lies in my arms, and common fate,
Had but his issue been more fortunate,
Might well have joined our children—since this red
Chance hath so stamped its heel on Laïus' head,
I am his champion, left, and, as I would
For mine own father, choose for ill or good
This quest, to find the man who slew of yore
Labdacus' son, the son of Polydore,
Son of great Cadmus whom Agenor old
Begot, of Thebes first master. And, behold,
For them that aid me not, I pray no root

Nor seed in earth may bear them corn nor fruit,
No wife bear children, but this present curse
Cleave to them close and other woes yet worse.

Enough: ye other people of the land,
Whose will is one with mine, may Justice stand
Your helper, and all gods for evermore.

[*The crowd disperses.*]

LEADER.

O King, even while thy curse yet hovers o'er
My head, I answer thee. I slew him not,
Nor can I shew the slayer. But, God wot,
If Phoebus sends this charge, let Phoebus read
Its meaning and reveal who did the deed.

OEDIPUS.

Aye, that were just, if of his grace he would
Reveal it. How shall man compel his God?

LEADER.

Second to that, methinks, 'twould help us most . . .

OEDIPUS.

Though it be third, speak! Nothing should be lost.

LEADER.

To our High Seer on earth vision is given
Most like to that High Phoebus hath in heaven.
Ask of Tiresias: he could tell thee true.

OEDIPUS.

That also have I thought for. Aye, and two
Heralds have sent ere now. 'Twas Creon set
Me on.—I marvel that he comes not yet.

LEADER.

Our other clues are weak, old signs and far.

OEDIPUS.

What signs? I needs must question all that are.

LEADER.

Some travellers slew him, the tale used to be.

OEDIPUS.

The tale, yes: but the witness, where is he?

LEADER.

The man hath heard thy curses. If he knows
The taste of fear, he will not long stay close.

OEDIPUS.

He fear my words, who never feared the deed?

LEADER.

Well, there is one shall find him.—See, they lead
Hither our Lord Tiresias, in whose mind
All truth is born, alone of human kind.

[*Enter TIRESIAS led by a young disciple. He is an old blind man in a prophet's robe, dark, unkempt and sinister in appearance.*]

OEDIPUS.

Tiresias, thou whose mind divineth well
All Truth, the spoken and the unspeakable,
The things of heaven and them that walk the earth;
Our city . . . thou canst see, for all thy dearth
Of outward eyes, what clouds are over her.
In which, O gracious Lord, no minister
Of help, no champion, can we find at all
Save thee. For Phoebus—thou hast heard withal
His message—to our envoy hath decreed
One only way of help in this great need:
To find and smite with death or banishing,
Him who smote Laïus, our ancient King.
Oh, grudge us nothing! Question every cry
Of birds, and all roads else of prophecy
Thou knowest. Save our city: save thine own
Greatness: save me; save all that yet doth groan

Under the dead man's wrong! Lo, in thy hand
We lay us. And, methinks, no work so grand
Hath man yet compassed, as, with all he can
Of chance or power, to help his fellow man.

TIRESIAS (*to himself*).

Ah me!

A fearful thing is knowledge, when to know
Helpeth no end. I knew this long ago,
But crushed it dead. Else had I never come.

OEDIPUS.

What means this? Comest thou so deep in gloom?

TIRESIAS.

Let me go back! Thy work shall weigh on thee
The less, if thou consent, and mine on me.

OEDIPUS.

Prophet, this is not lawful; nay, nor kind
To Thebes, who feeds thee, thus to veil thy mind.

TIRESIAS.

'Tis that I like not thy mind, nor the way
It goeth. Therefore, lest I also stray . . .

[*He moves to go off.* OEDIPUS *bars his road.*]

OEDIPUS.

Thou shalt not, knowing, turn and leave us! See,
We all implore thee, all, on bended knee.

TIRESIAS.

Ye have no knowledge. What is mine I hold
For ever dumb, lest what is thine be told.

OEDIPUS.

What wilt thou? Know and speak not? In my need
Be false to me, and let thy city bleed?

TIRESIAS.

I will not wound myself nor thee. Why seek
To trap and question me? I will not speak.

OEDIPUS.

Thou devil!

[*Movement of LEADER to check him.*]

Nay; the wrath of any stone

Would rise at him. It lies with thee to have done

And speak. Is there no melting in thine eyes!

TIRESIAS.

Naught lies with me! With thee, with thee there lies,
I warrant, what thou ne'er hast seen nor guessed.

OEDIPUS (*to LEADER, who tries to calm him*).

How can I hear such talk?—he maketh jest

Of the land's woe—and keep mine anger dumb?

TIRESIAS.

Howe'er I hold it back, 'twill come, 'twill come.

OEDIPUS.

The more shouldst thou declare it to thy King.

TIRESIAS.

I speak no more. For thee, if passioning

Doth comfort thee, on, passion to thy fill!

[*He moves to go.*]

OEDIPUS.

'Fore God, I am in wrath; and speak I will,

Nor stint what I see clear. 'Twas thou, 'twas thou,

Didst plan this murder; aye, and, save the blow,

Wrought it.—I know thou art blind; else I could swear

Thou, and thou only, art the murderer.

TIRESIAS (*returning*).

So?—I command thee by thine own word's power,

To stand accurst, and never from this hour

Speak word to me, nor yet to these who ring

Thy throne. Thou art thyself the unclean thing.

OEDIPUS.

Thou front of brass, to fling out injury

So wild! Dost think to bate me and go free?

TIRESIAS.

I am free. The strong truth is in this heart.

OEDIPUS.

What prompted thee? I swear 'twas not thine art.

TIRESIAS.

'Twas thou. I spoke not, save for thy command.

OEDIPUS.

Spoke what? What was it? Let me understand.

TIRESIAS.

Dost tempt me? Were my words before not plain!

OEDIPUS.

Scarce thy full meaning. Speak the words again.

TIRESIAS.

Thou seek'st this man of blood: Thyself art he.

OEDIPUS.

'Twill cost thee dear, twice to have stabbed at me!

TIRESIAS.

Shall I say more, to see thee rage again?

OEDIPUS.

Ot, take thy fill of speech: 'twill all be vain.

TIRESIAS.

Thou livest with those near to thee in shame
Most deadly, seeing not thyself nor them.

OEDIPUS.

Thou think'st 'twill help thee, thus to speak and speak?

TIRESIAS.

Surely, until the strength of Truth be weak.

OEDIPUS.

'Tis weak to none save thee. Thou hast no part
In truth, thou blind man, blind eyes, ears and heart.

TIRESIAS.

More blind, more sad thy words of scorn, which none
Who hears but shall cast back on thee: soon, soon.

OEDIPUS.

Thou spawn of Night, not I nor any free
And seeing man would hurt a thing like thee.

TIRESIAS.

God is enough.—'Tis not my doom to fall
By thee. He knows and shall accomplish all.

OEDIPUS (*with a flash of discovery*).

Ha! Creon!—Is it his or thine, this plot?

TIRESIAS.

'Tis thyself hates thee. Creon hates thee not.

OEDIPUS.

O wealth and majesty, O skill all strife
Surpassing on the fevered roads of life,
What is your heart but bitterness, if now
For this poor crown Thebes bound upon my brow,
A gift, a thing I sought not—for this crown
Creon the stern and true, Creon mine own
Comrade, comes creeping in the dark to ban
And slay me; sending first this magic-man
And schemer, this false beggar-priest, whose eye
Is bright for gold and blind for prophecy.
Speak, thou. When hast thou ever shown thee strong
For aid? The She-Wolf of the woven song
Came, and thy art could find no word, no breath,
To save thy people from her riddling death.
'Twas scarce a secret, that, for common men
To unravel. There was need of Seer-craft then.
And thou hadst none to show. No fowl, no flame,
No God revealed it thee. 'Twas I that came,
Rude Oedipus, unlearned in wizard's lore,
And read her secret, and she spoke no more.

Whom now thou thinkest to hunt out, and stand
Foremost in honour at King Creon's hand.
I think ye will be sorry, thou and he
That shares thy sin-hunt. Thou dost look to me
An old man; else, I swear this day should bring
On thee the death thou plottest for thy King.

LEADER.

Lord Oedipus, these be but words of wrath,
All thou hast spoke and all the Prophet hath.
Which skills not. We must join, for ill or well,
In search how best to obey God's oracle.

TIRESIAS.

King though thou art, thou needs must bear the right
Of equal answer. Even in me is might
For thus much, seeing I live no thrall of thine,
But Lord Apollo's; neither do I sign
Where Creon bids me.

I am blind, and thou
Hast mocked my blindness. Yea, I will speak now.
Eyes 'hast thou, but thy deeds thou canst not see
Nor where thou art, nor what things dwell with thee.
Whence art thou born? Thou know'st not; and unknown,
On quick and dead, on all that were thine own,
Thou hast wrought hate. For that across thy path
Rising, a mother's and a father's wrath,
Two-handed, shod with fire, from the haunts of men
Shall scourge thee, in thine eyes now light, but then
Darkness. Aye, shriek! What harbour of the sea,
What wild Kithairon shall not cry to thee
In answer, when thou hear'st what bridal song,
What wind among the torches, bore thy strong
Sail to its haven, not of peace but blood.
Yea, ill things multitude on multitude.
Thou seest not, which so soon shall lay thee low,
Low as thyself, low as thy children.—Go,
Heap scorn on Creon and my lips withal:

For this I tell thee, never was there fall
Of pride, nor shall be, like to thine this day.

OEDIPUS.

To brook such words from this thing? Out, I say!
Out to perdition! Aye, and quick, before . . .

[*The LEADER restrains him.*]

Enough then!—Turn and get thee from my door.

TIRESIAS.

I had not come hadst thou not called me here.

OEDIPUS.

I knew thee not so dark a fool. I swear
'Twere long before I called thee, had I known.

TIRESIAS.

Fool, say'st thou? Am I truly such an one?
The two who gave thee birth, they held me wise.

OEDIPUS.

Birth? . . . Stop! Who were they? Speak thy prophecies.

TIRESIAS.

This day shall give thee birth and blot thee out.

OEDIPUS.

Oh, riddles everywhere and words of doubt!

TIRESIAS.

Aye. Thou wast their best reader long ago.

OEDIPUS.

Laugh on. I swear thou still shalt find me so.

TIRESIAS.

That makes thy pride and thy calamity.

OEDIPUS.

I have saved this land, and care not if I die.

TIRESIAS.

Then I will go.—Give me thine arm, my child.

OEDIPUS.

Aye, help him quick.—To see him there makes wild
My heart. Once gone, he will not vex me more.

TIRESIAS (*turning again as he goes*).

I fear thee not; nor will I go before
That word be spoken which I came to speak.
How canst thou ever touch me?—Thou dost seek
With threats and loud proclaim the man whose hand
Slew Laius. Lo, I tell thee, he doth stand
Here. He is called a stranger, but these days
Shall prove him Theban true, nor shall he praise
His birthright. Blind, who once had seeing eyes,
Beggared, who once had riches, in strange guise,
His staff groping before him, he shall crawl
O'er unknown earth, and voices round him call:
"Behold the brother-father of his own
Children, the seed, the sower and the sown,
Shame to his mother's blood, and to his sire
Son, murderer, incest-worker."

Cool thine ire

With thought of these, and if thou find that aught
Faieth, then hold my craft a thing of naught.

[*He goes out. OEDIPUS returns to the Palace.*]

CHORUS.

[*They sing of the unknown murderer.*]

What man, what man is he whom the voice of Delphi's cell
Hath named of the bloody hand, of the deed no tongue
may tell?

Let him fly, fly, for his need

Hath found him; oh, where is the speed
That flew with the winds of old, the team of North-Wind's
spell?

For feet there be that follow. Yea, thunder-shod
And girt with fire he cometh, the Child of God,
And with him are they that fail not, the Sin-Hounds risen
from Hell.

For the mountain hath spoken, a voice hath flashed from
amid the snows,
That the wrath of the world go seek for the man whom no
man knows.

Is he fled to the wild forest,
To caves where the eagles nest?

O angry bull of the rocks, cast out from thy herd-fellows!
Rage in his heart, and rage across his way,
He toileth ever to beat from his ears away

The word that floateth about him, living, where'er he goes.

[*And of the Prophet's strange accusation.*]

Yet strange, passing strange, the wise augur and his lore;

And my heart it cannot speak; I deny not nor assent,
But float, float in wonder at things after and before;

Did there lie between their houses some old wrath unspent,
That Corinth against Cadmus should do murder by the way?

No tale thereof they tell, nor no sign thereof they show;
Who dares to rise for vengeance and cast Oedipus away
For a dark, dark death long ago!

Ah, Zeus knows, and Apollo, what is dark to mortal eyes;

They are Gods. But a prophet, hath he vision more than
mine?

Who hath seen? Who can answer? There be wise men and
unwise.

I will wait, I will wait, for the proving of the sign.

But I list not nor hearken when they speak Oedipus ill.

We saw his face of yore, when the riddling singer
passed;

And we knew him that he loved us, and we saw him great
in skill.

Oh, my heart shall uphold him to the last!

[*Enter CREON.*]

CREON.

Good brother citizens, a frantic word

I hear is spoken by our chosen Lord

Oedipus against me, and here am come

Indignant. If he dreams, 'mid all this doom

That weighs upon us, he hath had from me
Or deed or lightest thought of injury, . . .
'Fore God, I have no care to see the sun
Longer with such a groaning name. Not one
Wound is it, but a multitude, if now
All Thebes must hold me guilty,—aye, and thou
And all who loved me—of a deed so foul.

LEADER.

If words were spoken, it was scarce the soul
That spoke them: 'twas some sudden burst of wrath.

CREON.

The charge was made, then, that Tiresias hath
Made answer false, and that I bribed him, I?

LEADER.

It was—perchance for jest. I know not why.

CREON.

His heart beat true, his eyes looked steadily
And fell not, laying such a charge on me?

LEADER.

I know not. I have no eyes for the thing
My masters do.—But see, here comes the King.

[*Enter Oedipus from the Palace.*]

OEDIPUS.

How now, assassin? Walking at my gate
With eye undimmed, thou plotter demonstrate
Against this life, and robber of my crown?
God help thee! Me! What was it set me down
Thy butt? So dull a brain hast found in me
Aforetime, such a faint heart, not to see
Thy work betimes, or seeing not to smite?
Art thou not rash, this once! It needeth might
Of friends, it needeth gold, to make a throne
Thy quarry; and I fear me thou hast none.

CREON.

One thing alone I ask thee. Let me speak
As thou hast spoken; then, with knowledge, wreak
Thy judgment. I accept it without fear.

OEDIPUS.

More skill hast thou to speak than I to hear
Thee. There is peril found in thee and hate.

CREON.

That one thing let me answer ere too late.

OEDIPUS.

One thing be sure of, that thy plots are known.

CREON.

The man who thinks that bitter pride alone
Can guide him, without thought—his mind is sick.

OEDIPUS.

Who thinks to slay his brother with a trick
And suffer not himself, his eyes are blind.

CREON.

Thy words are more than just. But say what kind
Of wrong thou fanciest I have done thee. Speak.

OEDIPUS.

Didst urge me, or didst urge me not, to seek
A counsel from that man of prophecies?

CREON.

So judged I then, nor now judge otherwise.

OEDIPUS.

[*Suddenly seeing a mode of attack.*]

How many years have passed since Laius . . .

[*The words seem to choke him.*]

CREON.

Speak on. I cannot understand thee thus.

OEDIPUS.

[With an effort.]

Passed in that bloody tempest from men's sight?

CREON.

Long years and old. I scarce can tell them right.

OEDIPUS.

At that time was this seer in Thebes, or how?

CREON.

He was; most wise and honoured, even as now.

OEDIPUS.

At that time did he ever speak my name?

CREON.

No. To mine ear at least it never came.

OEDIPUS.

Held you no search for those who slew your King?

CREON.

For sure we did, but found not anything.

OEDIPUS.

How came the all-knowing seer to leave it so?

CREON.

Ask him! I speak not where I cannot know.

OEDIPUS.

One thing thou canst, with knowledge full, I wot.

CREON.

Speak it. If true, I will conceal it not.

OEDIPUS.

This: that until he talked with thee, the seer
Ne'er spoke of me as Laius' murderer.

CREON.

I know not if he hath so spoke now.
I heard him not.—But let me ask and thou
Answer me true, as I have answered thee.

OEDIPUS.

Ask, ask! Thou shalt no murder find in me.

CREON.

My sister is thy wife this many a day?

OEDIPUS.

That charge it is not in me to gainsay.

CREON.

Thou reignest, giving equal reign to her?

OEDIPUS.

Always to her desire I minister.

CREON.

Were we not all as one, she thou and I?

OEDIPUS.

Yes, thou false friend! There lies thy treachery.

CREON.

Not so! Nay, do but follow me and scan
Thine own charge close. Think'st thou that any man
Would rather rule and be afraid than rule
And sleep untroubled? Nay, where lives the fool—
I know them not nor am I one of them—
Who careth more to bear a monarch's name
Than do a monarch's deeds? As now I stand
All my desire I compass at thy hand.
Were I the King, full half my deeds were done
To obey the will of others, not mine own.
Were that as sweet, when all the tale were told,
As this calm griefless pryncedom that I hold

And silent power? Am I so blind of brain
That ease with glory tires me, and I fain
Must change them? All men now give me God-speed,
All smile to greet me. If a man hath need
Of thee, 'tis me he calleth to the gate,
As knowing that on my word hangs the fate
Of half he craves. Is life like mine a thing
To cast aside and plot to be a King?
Doth a sane man turn villain in an hour?

For me, I never lusted thus for power
Nor bore with any man who turned such lust
To doing.—But enough. I claim but just
Question. Go first to Pytho; find if well
And true I did report God's oracle.
Next, seek in Thebes for any plots entwined
Between this seer and me; which if ye find,
Then seize and strike me dead. Myself that day
Will sit with thee as judge and bid thee Slay!
But damn me not on one man's guess.—'Tis all
Unjust: to call a traitor true, to call
A true man traitor with no cause nor end!
And this I tell thee. He who plucks a friend
Out from his heart hath lost a treasured thing
Dear as his own dear life.

But Time shall bring
Truth back. 'Tis Time alone can make men know
What hearts are true; the false one day can show.

LEADER.

To one that fears to fall his words are wise,
O King; in thought the swift win not the prize.

OEDIPUS.

When he is swift who steals against my reign
With plots, then swift am I to plot again.
Wait patient, and his work shall have prevailed
Before I move, and mine for ever failed.

CREON

How then? To banish me is thy intent?

OEDIPUS.

Death is the doom I choose, not banishment.

CREON.

Wilt never soften, never trust thy friend?

OEDIPUS.

First I would see how traitors meet their end.

CREON.

I see thou wilt not think.

OEDIPUS.

I think to save

My life.

CREON.

Think, too, of mine.

OEDIPUS.

Thine, thou born knave!

CREON.

Yes. . . . What, if thou are blind in everything?

OEDIPUS.

The King must be obeyed.

CREON.

Not if the King

Does evil.

OEDIPUS.

To your King! Ho, Thebes, mine own!

CREON.

Thebes is my country, not the King's alone.

[OEDIPUS has drawn his sword; the Chorus show signs of breaking into two parties to fight for OEDIPUS or for CREON, when the door opens and JOCASTA appears on the steps.]

LEADER

Stay, Princes, stay! See, on the Castle stair
The Queen Jocasta standeth. Show to her
Your strife. She will assuage it as is well.

JOCASTA.

Vain men, what would ye with this angry swell
Of words heart-blinded? Is there in your eyes
No pity, thus, when all our city lies
Bleeding, to ply your privy hates? . . . Alack,
My lord, come in!—Thou, Creon, get thee back
To thine own house. And stir not to such stress
Of peril griefs that are but nothingness.

CREON.

Sister, it is the pleasure of thy lord,
Our King, to do me deadly wrong. His word
Is passed on me: 'tis banishment or death.

OEDIPUS.

I found him . . . I deny not what he saith,
My Queen . . . with craft and malice practising
Against my life.

CREON.

Ye Gods, if such a thing
Hath once been in my thoughts, may I no more
See any health on earth, but, festered o'er
With curses, die!—Have done. There is mine oath.

JOCASTA.

In God's name, Oedipus, believe him, both
For my sake, and for these whose hearts are all
Thine own, and for my brother's oath withal.

LEADER.

[*Strophe.*]

Yield; consent; think! My Lord, I conjure thee!

OEDIPUS.

What would ye have me do?

LEADER.

Reject not one who never failed his troth
Of old and now is strong in his great oath.

OEDIPUS.

Dost know what this prayer means?

LEADER.

Yea, verily!

OEDIPUS.

Say then the meaning true.

LEADER.

I would not have thee cast to infamy
Of guilt, where none is proved,
One who hath sworn and whom thou once hast loved.

OEDIPUS.

'Tis that ye seek? For me, then . . . understand
Well . . . ye seek death or exile from the land.

LEADER.

No, by the God of Gods, the all-seeing Sun!

May he desert me here, and every friend
With him, to death and utterest malison,
If e'er my heart could dream of such an end!

But it bleedeth, it bleedeth sore,

In a land half slain,

If we join to the griefs of yore

Griefs of you twain.

OEDIPUS.

Oh, let him go, though it be utterly
My death, or flight from Thebes in beggary.
'Tis thy sad lips, not his, that make me know
Pity. Him I shall hate, where'er he go.

CREON.

I see thy mercy moving full of hate
And slow; thy wrath came swift and desperate.
Methinks, of all the pain that such a heart
Spreadeth, itself doth bear the bitterest part.

OEDIPUS.

Oh, leave me and begone!

CREON.

I go, wronged sore
By thee. These friends will trust me as before.
[CREON goes. OEDIPUS stands apart lost in
trouble of mind.]

LEADER. [Antistrophe.]

Queen, wilt thou lead him to his house again?

JOCASTA.

I will, when I have heard.

LEADER.

There fell some word, some blind imagining
Between them. Things known foolish yet can sting.

JOCASTA.

From both the twain it rose?

LEADER.

From both the twain.

JOCASTA.

Aye, and what was the word?

LEADER.

Surely there is enough of evil stirred,
And Thebes heaves on the swell
Of storm.—Oh, leave this lying where it fell.

OEDIPUS.

So be it, thou wise counsellor! Make slight
My wrong, and blunt my purpose ere it smite.

LEADER.

O King, not once I have answered. Visibly
Mad were I, lost to all wise usages,
To seek to cast thee from us. 'Twas from thee
We saw of old blue sky and summer seas,
When Thebes in the storm and rain
Reeled, like to die.
Oh, if thou canst, again
Blue sky, blue sky . . . !

JOCASTA.

Husband, in God's name, say what hath ensued
Of ill, that thou shouldst seek so dire a feud.

OEDIPUS.

I will, wife. I have more regard for thee
Than these.—Thy brother plots to murder me.

JOCASTA.

Speak on. Make all thy charge. Only be clear.

OEDIPUS.

He says that I am Laïus' murderer.

JOCASTA.

Says it himself? Says he hath witnesses?

OEDIPUS.

Nay, of himself he ventures nothing. 'Tis
This priest, this hellish seer, makes all the tale.

JOCASTA.

The seer?—Then tear thy terrors like a veil
And take free breath. A seer? No human thing
Born on earth hath power for conjuring

Truth from the dark of God.

Come, I will tell
An old tale. There came once an oracle
To Laius: I say not from the God
Himself, but from the priests and seers who trod
His sanctuary: if ever son were bred
From him and me, by that son's hand, it said,
Laius must die. And he, the tale yet stays
Among us, at the crossing of three ways
Was slain by robbers, strangers. And my son—
God's mercy!—scarcely the third day was gone
When Laius took, and by another's hand
Out on the desert mountain, where the land
Is rock, cast him to die. Through both his feet
A blade of iron they drove. Thus did we cheat
Apollo of his will. My child could slay
No father, and the King could cast away
The fear that dogged him, by his child to die
Murdered.—Behold the fruits of prophecy!
Which heed not thou! God needs not that a seer
Help him, when he would make his dark things clear.

OEDIPUS.

Woman, what turmoil hath thy story wrought
Within me! What up-stirring of old thought!

JOCASTA.

What thought? It turns thee like a frightened thing.

OEDIPUS.

'Twas at the crossing of three ways this King
Was murdered? So I heard or so I thought.

JOCASTA.

That was the tale. It is not yet forgot.

OEDIPUS.

The crossing of three ways! And in what land?

JOCASTA.

Phokis 'tis called. A road on either hand
From Delphi comes and Daulia, in a glen.

OEDIPUS.

How many years and months have passed since then?

JOCASTA.

'Twas but a little time before proclaim
Was made of thee for king, the tidings came.

OEDIPUS.

My God, what hast thou willed to do with me?

JOCASTA.

Oedipus, speak! What is it troubles thee?

OEDIPUS.

Ask me not yet. But say, what build, what height
Had Laius? Rode he full of youth and might?

JOCASTA.

Tall, with the white new gleaming on his brow
He walked. In shape just such a man as thou.

OEDIPUS.

God help me! I much fear that I have wrought
A curse on mine own head, and knew it not.

JOCASTA.

How sayst thou? O my King, I look on thee
And tremble.

OEDIPUS (*to himself*).

Horror, if the blind can see!
Answer but one thing and 'twill all be clear.

JOCASTA.

Speak. I will answer though I shake with fear.

OEDIPUS.

Went he with scant array, or a great band
Of armèd followers, like a lord of land?

JOCASTA.

Four men were with him, one a herald; one
Chariot there was, where Laius rode alone.

OEDIPUS.

Aye me! 'Tis clear now.

Woman, who could bring
To Thebes the story of that manslaying?

JOCASTA.

A house-thrall, the one man they failed to slay.

OEDIPUS.

The one man . . . ? Is he in the house to-day?

JOCASTA.

Indeed no. When he came that day, and found
Thee on the throne where once sat Laius crowned,
He took my hand and prayed me earnestly
To send him to the mountain heights, to be
A herdsman, far from any sight or call
Of Thebes. And there I sent him. 'Twas a thrall
Good-hearted, worthy a far greater boon.

OEDIPUS.

Canst find him? I would see this herd, and soon.

JOCASTA.

'Tis easy. But what wouldst thou with the herd?

OEDIPUS.

I fear mine own voice, lest it spoke a word
Too much; whereof this man must tell me true.

JOCASTA.

The man shall come.—My lord, methinks I too
Should know what fear doth work thee this despite.

OEDIPUS.

Thou shalt. When I am tossed to such an height
Of dark foreboding, woman, when my mind
Faceth such straits as these, where should I find
A mightier love than thine?

My father—thus

I tell thee the whole tale—was Polybus,
In Corinth King; my mother Meropê
Of Dorian line. And I was held to be
The proudest in Corinthia, till one day
A thing befell: strange was it, but no way
Meet for such wonder and such rage as mine.
A feast it was, and some one flushed with wine
Cried out at me that I was no true son
Of Polybus. Oh, I was wroth! That one
Day I kept silence, but the morrow morn
I sought my parents, told that tale of scorn
And claimed the truth; and they rose in their pride
And smote the mocker. . . . Aye, they satisfied
All my desire; yet still the cavil gnawed
My heart, and still the story crept abroad.

At last I rose—my father knew not, nor
My mother—and went forth to Pytho's floor
To ask. And God in that for which I came
Rejected me, but round me, like a flame,
His voice flashed other answers, things of woe,
Terror, and desolation. I must know
My mother's body and beget thereon
A race no mortal eye durst look upon,
And spill in murder mine own father's blood.

I heard, and, hearing, straight from where I stood,
No landmark but the stars to light my way,
Fled, fled from the dark south where Corinth lay,
To lands far off, where never I might see
My doom of scorn fulfilled. On bitterly
I strode, and reached the region where, so saith
Thy tale, that King of Thebes was struck to death. . . .

Wife, I will tell thee true. As one in daze
I walked, till, at the crossing of three ways,
A herald, like thy tale, and o'er his head
A man behind strong horses charioted
Met me. And both would turn me from the path,
He and a thrall in front. And I in wrath
Smote him that pushed me—'twas a groom who led
The horses. Not a word the master said,
But watched, and as I passed him on the road
Down on my head his iron-branchèd goad
Stabbed. But, by heaven, he rued it! In a flash
I swung my staff and saw the old man crash
Back from his car in blood. . . . Then all of them
I slew.

Oh, if that man's unspoken name
Had aught of Laius in him, in God's eye
What man doth move more miserable than I,
More dogged by the hate of heaven! No man, kin
Nor stranger, any more may take me in;
No man may greet me with a word, but all
Cast me from out their houses. And withal
'Twas mine own self that laid upon my life
These curses.—And I hold the dead man's wife
In these polluting arms that spilt his soul. . . .
Am I a thing born evil? Am I foul
In every vein? Thebes now doth banish me,
And never in this exile must I see
Mine ancient folk of Corinth, never tread
The land that bore me; else my mother's bed
Shall be defiled, and Polybus, my good
Father, who loved me well, be rolled in blood.
If one should dream that such a world began
In some slow devil's heart, that hated man,
Who should deny him?—God, as thou art clean,
Suffer not this, oh, suffer not this sin
To be, that e'er I look on such a day!
Out of all vision of mankind away

To darkness let me fall ere such a fate
Touch me, so unclean and so desolate!

LEADER.

I tremble too, O King; but till thou hear
From him who saw, oh, let hope conquer fear.

OEDIPUS.

One shred of hope I still have, and therefore
Will wait the herdsman's coming. 'Tis no more.

JOCASTA.

He shall come. But what further dost thou seek?

OEDIPUS.

This. If we mark him close and find him speak
As thou hast, then I am lifted from my dread.

JOCASTA.

What mean'st thou? Was there something that I said . . . ?

OEDIPUS.

Thou said'st he spoke of robbers, a great band,
That slaughtered Laius' men. If still he stand
To the same tale, the guilt comes not my way.
One cannot be a band. But if he say
One lonely loin-girt man, then visibly
This is God's finger pointing toward me.

JOCASTA.

Be sure of this. He told the story so
When first he came. All they that heard him know,
Not only I. He cannot change again
Now. And if change he should, O Lord of men,
No change of his can make the prophecy
Of Laius' death fall true. He was to die

Slain by my son. So Loxias spake. . . . My son!
He slew no man, that poor deserted one
That died. . . . And I will no more turn mine eyes
This way nor that for all their prophecies.

OEDIPUS.

Woman, thou counsell'est well. Yet let it not
Escape thee. Send and have the herdsman brought.

JOCASTA.

That will I.—Come. Thou knowest I ne'er would do
Nor think of aught, save thou wouldst have it so.

[JOCASTA and OEDIPUS go together into the Palace.]

CHORUS.

[*They pray to be free from such great sins as they have
just heard spoken of.*] [Strophe.]

Toward God's great mysteries, oh, let me move
Unstained till I die
In speech or doing; for the Laws thereof
Are holy, walkers upon ways above,
Born in the far blue sky;

Their father is Olympus uncreate;
No man hath made nor told
Their being; neither shall Oblivion set
Sleep on their eyes, for in them lives a great
Spirit and grows not old. [Antistrophe.]
[*They wonder if these sins be all due to pride and if
CREON has guilty ambitions.*]

'Tis Pride that breeds the tyrant; drunken deep
With perilous things is she,
Which bring not peace: up, reeling, steep on steep
She climbs, till lo, the rock-edge, and the leap
To that which needs must be,

The land where the strong foot is no more strong!
Yet is there surely Pride
That saves a city; God preserve it long!
I judge not. Only through all maze of wrong
Be God, not man, my guide. [Strophe.]

[Or if TIRESIAS can really be a lying prophet with no fear of God; they feel that all faith in oracles and the things of God is shaken.]

Is there a priest who moves amid the altars
 Ruthless in deed and word,
 Fears not the presence of his god, nor falters
 Lest Right at last be heard?
 If such there be, oh, let some doom be given
 Meet for his ill-starred pride,
 Who will not gain his gain where Justice is,
 Who will not hold his lips from blasphemies,
 Who hurls rash hands amid the things of heaven
 From man's touch sanctified.

In a world where such things be,
 What spirit hath shield or lance
 To ward him secretly
 From the arrow that slays askance?
 If honour to such things be,
 Why should I dance my dance?

[Antistrophe.]

I go no more with prayers and adorations
 To Earth's deep Heart of Stone,
 Nor yet the Abantes' floor, nor where the nations
 Kneel at Olympia's throne,
 Till all this dark be lightened, for the finger
 Of man to touch and know.
 O Thou that rulest—if men rightly call
 Thy name on earth—O Zeus, thou Lord of all
 And Strength undying, let not these things linger
 Unknown, tossed to and fro.

For faint is the oracle,
 And they thrust it aside, away;
 And no more visible
 Apollo to save or slay;
 And the things of God, they fail
 As mist on the wind away.

[JOCASTA comes out from the Palace followed by hand-maids bearing incense and flowers.]

JOCASTA.

Lords of the land, the ways my thought hath trod
Lead me in worship to these shrines of God
With flowers and incense flame. So dire a storm
Doth shake the King, sin, dread and every form
Of grief the world knows. 'Tis the wise man's way
To judge the morrow by the yester day;
Which he doth never, but gives eye and ear
To all who speak, will they but speak of fear.

And seeing no word of mine hath power to heal
His torment, therefore forth to thee I steal,
O Slayer of the Wolf, O Lord of Light,
Apollo: thou art near us, and of right
Dost hold us thine: to thee in prayer I fall.

[*She kneels at the altar of Apollo Lukeios.*]

Oh, show us still some path that is not all
Unclean; for now our captain's eyes are dim
With dread, and the whole ship must follow him.

[*While she prays a STRANGER has entered and begins to accost the Chorus.*]

STRANGER.

Good masters, is there one of you could bring
My steps to the house of Oedipus, your King?
Or, better, to himself if that may be?

LEADER.

This is the house and he within; and she
Thou seest, the mother of his royal seed.

[*JOCASTA rises, anxious, from her prayer.*]

STRANGER.

Being wife to such a man, happy indeed
And ringed with happy faces may she live!

JOCASTA.

To one so fair of speech may the Gods give
Like blessing, courteous stranger; 'tis thy due.
But say what leads thee hither. Can we do
Thy wish in aught, or hast thou news to bring?

STRANGER.

Good news, O Queen, for thee and for the King.

JOCASTA.

What is it? And from what prince comest thou?

STRANGER.

I come from Corinth.—And my tale, I trow,
Will give thee joy, yet haply also pain.

JOCASTA.

What news can have that twofold power? Be plain.

STRANGER.

'Tis spoke in Corinth that the gathering
Of folk will make thy lord our chosen King.

JOCASTA.

How? Is old Polybus in power no more?

STRANGER.

Death has a greater power. His reign is o'er.

JOCASTA.

What say'st thou? Dead? . . . Oedipus' father dead?

STRANGER.

If I speak false, let me die in his stead.

JOCASTA.

Ho, maiden! To our master! Hie thee fast
And tell this tale.

[*The maiden goes.*]

Where stand ye at the last

Ye oracles of God? For many a year
Oedipus fled before that man, in fear
To slay him. And behold we find him thus
Slain by a chance death, not by Oedipus.

[OEDIPUS comes out from the Palace.]

OEDIPUS.

Jocasta, thou I love to look upon,
Why call'st thou me from where I sat alone?

JOCASTA.

Give ear, and ponder from what this man tells
How end these proud priests and their oracles.

OEDIPUS.

Whence comes he? And what word hath he for us?

JOCASTA.

From Corinth; bearing news that Polybus
Thy father is no more. He has found his death.

OEDIPUS.

How?—Stranger, speak thyself. This that she saith . . .

STRANGER.

Is sure. If that is the first news ye crave,
I tell thee, Polybus lieth in his grave.

OEDIPUS.

Not murdered? . . . How? Some passing of disease?

STRANGER.

A slight thing turns an old life to its peace.

OEDIPUS.

Poor father! . . . 'Tis by sickness he is dead?

STRANGER.

The growing years lay heavy on his head.

OEDIPUS.

O wife, why then should man fear any more
The voice of Pytho's dome, or cower before
These birds that shriek above us? They foretold
Me for my father's murderer; and behold,
He lies in Corinth dead, and here am I
And never touched the sword. . . . Or did he die
In grief for me who left him? In that way
I may have wrought his death. . . . But come what may,
He sleepeth in his grave and with him all
This deadly seercraft, of no worth at all.

JOCASTA.

Dear Lord, long since did I not show thee clear . . . ?

OEDIPUS.

Indeed, yes. I was warped by mine own fear.

JOCASTA.

Now thou wilt cast it from thee, and forget.

OEDIPUS.

Forget my mother? . . . It is not over yet.

JOCASTA.

What should man do with fear, who hath but Chance
Above him, and no sight nor governance
Of things to be. To live as life may run,
No fear, no fret, were wisest 'neath the sun.
And thou, fear not thy mother. Prophets deem
A deed wrought that is wrought but in a dream.
And he to whom these things are nothing, best
Will bear his burden.

OEDIPUS.

All thou counsell'st
Were good, save that my mother liveth still.
And, though thy words be wise, for good or ill
Her I still fear.

JOCASTA.

Think of thy father's tomb!
Like light across our darkness it hath come.

OEDIPUS.

Great light; but while she lives I fly from her.

STRANGER.

What woman, Prince, doth fill thee so with fear?

OEDIPUS.

Meropê, friend, who dwelt with Polybus.

STRANGER.

What in Queen Meropê should fright thee thus?

OEDIPUS.

A voice of God, stranger, of dire import.

STRANGER.

Meet for mine ears? Or of some secret sort?

OEDIPUS.

Nay, thou must hear, and Corinth. Long ago
Apollo spake a doom, that I should know
My mother's flesh, and with mine own hand spill
My father's blood.—'Tis that, and not my will,
Hath kept me always far from Corinth. So;
Life hath dealt kindly with me, yet men know
On earth no comfort like a mother's face.

STRANGER.

'Tis that, hath kept thee exiled in this place?

OEDIPUS.

That, and the fear too of my father's blood.

STRANGER.

Then, surely, Lord . . . I came but for thy good . . .
'Twere well if from that fear I set thee free.

OEDIPUS.

Ah, couldst thou! There were rich reward for thee.

STRANGER.

To say truth, I had hoped to lead thee home
Now, and myself to get some good therefrom.

OEDIPUS.

Nay; where my parents are I will not go.

STRANGER.

My son, 'tis clear enough thou dost not know
Thine own road.

OEDIPUS.

How? Old man, in God's name, say.

STRANGER.

If this it is, keeps thee so long away
From Corinth.

OEDIPUS.

'Tis the fear lest that word break
One day upon me true.

STRANGER.

Fear lest thou take
Defilement from the two that gave thee birth?

OEDIPUS.

'Tis that, old man, 'tis that doth fill the earth
With terror.

STRANGER.

Then thy terror all hath been
For nothing.

OEDIPUS.

How? Were not your King and Queen
My parents?

STRANGER.

Polybus was naught to thee

In blood.

OEDIPUS.

How? He, my father!

STRANGER.

That was he

As much as I, but no more.

OEDIPUS.

Thou are naught;

'Twas he begot me.

STRANGER.

'Twas not I begot

Oedipus, neither was it he.

OEDIPUS.

What wild

Fancy, then, made him name me for his child?

STRANGER.

Thou wast his child—by gift. Long years ago
Mine own hand brought thee to him.

OEDIPUS.

Coming so,

From a strange hand, he gave me that great love?

STRANGER.

He had no child, and the desire thereof
Held him.

OEDIPUS.

And thou didst find somewhere—or buy—
A child for him?

STRANGER.

I found it in a high

Glen of Kithairon.

[*Movement of JOCASTA, who stands riveted with dread,
unnoticed by the others.*]

OEDIPUS.

Yonder? To what end

Wast travelling in these parts?

STRANGER.

I came to tend

The flocks here on the mountain.

OEDIPUS.

Thou wast one

That wandered, tending sheep for hire?

STRANGER.

My son,

That day I was the saviour of a King.

OEDIPUS.

How saviour? Was I in some suffering
Or peril?

STRANGER.

Thine own feet a tale could speak.

OEDIPUS.

Ah me! What ancient pain stirs half awake
Within me!

STRANGER.

'Twas a spike through both thy feet.

I set thee free.

OEDIPUS.

A strange scorn that, to greet
A babe new on the earth!

STRANGER.

From that they fain
Must call thee Oedipus, "*Who-walks in pain.*"

OEDIPUS.

Who called me so—father or mother? Oh,
In God's name, speak!

STRANGER.

I know not. He should know
Who brought thee.

OEDIPUS.

So: I was not found by thee.
Thou hadst me from another?

STRANGER.

Aye; to me
One of the shepherds gave the babe, to bear
Far off.

OEDIPUS.

What shepherd? Know'st thou not? Declare
All that thou knowest.

STRANGER.

By my memory, then,
I think they called him one of Laius' men.

OEDIPUS.

That Laius who was king in Thebes of old?

STRANGER.

The same. My man did herding in his fold.

OEDIPUS.

Is he yet living? Can I see his face?

STRANGER.

[*Turning to the Chorus.*]

Ye will know that, being natives to the place.

OEDIPUS.

How?—Is there one of you within my pale
Standing, that knows the shepherd of his tale?
Ye have seen him on the hills? Or in this town?
Speak! For the hour is come that all be known.

LEADER.

I think 'twill be the Peasant Man, the same,
Thou hast sought long time to see.—His place and name
Our mistress, if she will, can tell most clear.

[JOCASTA remains as if she heard nothing.]

OEDIPUS.

Thou hear'st him, wife. The herd whose presence here
We craved for, is it he this man would say?

JOCASTA.

He saith . . . What of it? Ask not; only pray .
Not to remember. . . . Tales are vainly told.

OEDIPUS.

'Tis mine own birth. How can I, when I hold
Such clues as these, refrain from knowing all?

JOCASTA.

For God's love, no! Not if thou car'st at all
For thine own life. . . . My anguish is enough.

OEDIPUS (*bitterly*).

Fear not! . . . Though I be thrice of slavish stuff
From my third grand-dam down, it shames not thee.

JOCASTA.

Ask no more. I beseech thee . . . Promise me!

OEDIPUS.

To leave the Truth half-found? 'Tis not my mood.

JOCASTA.

I understand; and tell thee what is good.

OEDIPUS.

Thy good doth weary me.

JOCASTA.

O child of woe,
I pray God, I pray God, thou never know!

OEDIPUS (*turning from her*).

Go, fetch the herdsman straight!—This Queen of mine
May walk alone to boast her royal line.

JOCASTA.

[*She twice draws in her breath through her teeth, as if in
some sharp pain.*]

Unhappy one, goodbye! Goodbye before
I go: this once, and never never more!

[*She comes towards him, then turns and goes into the
Palace.*]

LEADER.

King, what was that? She passed like one who flies
In very anguish. Dread is o'er mine eyes
Lest from this silence break some storm of wrong.

OEDIPUS.

Break what break will! My mind abideth strong
To know the roots, how low soe'er they be,
Which grew to Oedipus. This woman, she
Is proud, methinks, and fears my birth and name
Will mar her nobleness. But I, no shame
Can ever touch me. I am Fortune's child,
Not man's; her mother face hath ever smiled
Above me, and my brethren of the sky,
The changing Moons, have changed me low and high.
There is my lineage true, which none shall wrest
From me; who then am I to fear this quest?

CHORUS.

[*They sing of OEDIPUS as the foundling of their own
Theban mountain, Kithairon, and doubtless of divine
birth.*]

[*Strophe.*]

If I, O Kithairon, some vision can borrow
 From seercraft, if still there is wit in the old,
 Long, long, through the deep-orbèd Moon of the morrow—
 So hear me, Olympus!—thy tale shall be told.
 O mountain of Thebes, a new Theban shall praise thee,
 One born of thy bosom, one nursed at thy springs;
 And the old men shall dance to thy glory, and raise thee
 To worship, O bearer of joy to my kings.

And thou, we pray,
 Look down in peace, O Apollo; I-ê, I-ê!

[*Antistrophe.*]

What Oread mother, unaging, unweeping,
 Did bear thee, O Babe, to the Crag-walker Pan;
 Or perchance to Apollo? He loveth the leaping
 Of herds on the rock-ways unhaunted of man.
 Or was it the lord of Cyllênê, who found thee,
 Or glad Dionysus, whose home is the height,
 Who knew thee his own on the mountain, as round thee
 The White Brides of Helicon laughed for delight?
 'Tis there, 'tis there,
 The joy most liveth of all his dance and prayer.

OEDIPUS.

If I may judge, ye Elders, who have ne'er
 Seen him, methinks I see the shepherd there
 Whom we have sought so long. His weight of years
 Fits well with our Corinthian messenger's;
 And, more, I know the men who guide his way,
 Bondsmen of mine own house.

Thou, friend, wilt say
 Most surely, who hast known the man of old.

LEADER.

I know him well. A shepherd of the fold
 Of Laius, one he trusted more than all.

[*The SHEPHERD comes in, led by two thralls. He is an old man and seems terrified.*]

OEDIPUS.

Thou first, our guest from Corinth: say withal
Is this the man?

STRANGER.

This is the man, O King.

OEDIPUS.

[*Addressing the SHEPHERD.*]

Old man! Look up, and answer everything
I ask thee.—Thou wast Laius' man of old?

SHEPHERD.

Born in his house I was, not bought with gold.

OEDIPUS.

What kind of work, what way of life, was thine?

SHEPHERD.

Most of my days I tended sheep or kine.

OEDIPUS.

What was thy camping ground at midsummer?

SHEPHERD.

Sometimes Kithairon, sometimes mountains near.

OEDIPUS.

Saw'st ever there this man thou seest now?

SHEPHERD.

There, Lord? What doing?—What man meanest thou?

OEDIPUS.

[*Pointing to the STRANGER.*]

Look! Hath he ever crossed thy path before?

SHEPHERD.

I call him not to mind, I must think more.

STRANGER.

Small wonder that, O King! But I will throw
 Light on his memories.—Right well I know
 He knows the time when, all Kithairon through,
 I with one wandering herd and he with two,
 Three times we neighboured one another, clear
 From spring to autumn stars, a good half-year.
 At winter's fall we parted; he drove down
 To his master's fold, and I back to mine own. . . .
 Dost call it back, friend? Was it as I say?

SHEPHERD.

It was. It was. . . . 'Tis all so far away.

STRANGER.

Say then: thou gavest me once, there in the wild,
 A babe to rear far off as mine own child?

SHEPHERD.

[*His terror returning.*]

What does this mean? To what end askest thou?

STRANGER.

[*Pointing to OEDIPUS.*]

That babe has grown, friend. 'Tis our master now.

SHEPHERD.

[*He slowly understands, then stands for a moment horror-struck.*]

No, in the name of death! . . . Fool, hold thy peace.

[*He lifts his staff at the STRANGER.*]

OEDIPUS.

Ha, greybeard! Wouldst thou strike him?—'Tis not his
 Offences, 'tis thine own we need to mend.

SHEPHERD.

Most gentle master, how do I offend?

OEDIPUS.

Whence came that babe whereof he questioneth?

SHEPHERD.

He doth not know . . . 'tis folly . . . what he saith.

OEDIPUS.

Thou wilt not speak for love; but pain maybe . . .

SHEPHERD.

I am very old. Ye would not torture me.

OEDIPUS.

Back with his arms, ye bondmen! Hold him so.

[The thralls drag back the SHEPHERD's arms, ready for torture.]

SHEPHERD.

Woe's me! What have I done? . . . What wouldst thou know?

OEDIPUS.

Didst give this man the child, as he doth say?

SHEPHERD.

I did. . . . Would God that I had died this day!

OEDIPUS.

'Fore heaven, thou shalt yet, if thou speak not true.

SHEPHERD.

'Tis more than death and darker, if I do.

OEDIPUS.

This dog, it seems, will keep us waiting.

SHEPHERD.

Nay,

I said at first I gave it.

OEDIPUS.

In what way
Came it to thee? Was it thine own child, or
Another's?

SHEPHERD.

Nay, it never crossed my door:
Another's.

OEDIPUS.

Whose? What man, what house, of these
About thee?

SHEPHERD.

In the name of God who sees,
Ask me no more!

OEDIPUS.

If once I ask again,
Thou diest.

SHEPHERD.

From the folk of Laius, then,
It came.

OEDIPUS.

A slave, or born of Laius' blood?

SHEPHERD.

There comes the word I dread to speak, O God!

OEDIPUS.

And I to hear: yet heard it needs must be.

SHEPHERD.

Know then, they said 'twas Laius' child. But she
Within, thy wife, best knows it fathering.

OEDIPUS.

'Twas she that gave it?

SHEPHERD.

It was she, O King.

OEDIPUS.

And bade you . . . what?

SHEPHERD.

Destroy it.

OEDIPUS.

Her own child? . . .

Cruel!

SHEPHERD.

Dark words of God had made her wild.

OEDIPUS.

What words?

SHEPHERD.

The babe must slay his father; so

'Twas written.

OEDIPUS.

Why didst thou, then, let him go

With this old man?

SHEPHERD.

O King, my heart did bleed.

I thought the man would save him, past all need
Of fear, to his own distant home. . . . And he
Did save him, to great evil. Verily
If thou art he whom this man telleth of,
Know, to affliction thou art born.

OEDIPUS.

Enough!

All will come true. . . . Thou Light, never again
May I behold thee, I in the eyes of men

Made naked, how from sin my being grew,
In sin I wedded and in sin I slew!

[*He rushes into the Palace. The SHEPHERD is led away
by the thralls.*]

CHORUS.

[*Strophe.*]

Nothingness, nothingness,
Ye Children of Man, and less
 I count you, waking or dreaming!
And none among mortals, none,
Seeking to live, hath won
More than to seem, and to cease
 Again from his seeming.

While ever before mine eyes
One fate, one ensample, lies—
Thine, thine, O Oedipus, sore
 Of God oppressèd—
What thing that is human more
 Dare I call blessèd?

[*Antistrophe.*]

Straight his archery flew
To the heart of living; he knew
 Joy and the fulness of power,
O Zeus, when the riddling breath
Was stayed and the Maid of Death
Slain, and we saw him through
 The death-cloud, a tower!

For that he was called my king;
Yea, every precious thing
Wherewith men are honoured, down
 We cast before him,
And great Thebes brought her crown
 And kneeled to adore him.

[*Strophe.*]

But now, what man's story is such bitterness to speak?
 What life hath Delusion so visited, and Pain,

And swiftness of Disaster?

O great King, our master,

How oped the one haven to the slayer and the slain?
And the furrows of thy father, did they turn not nor shriek,
Did they bear so long silent thy casting of the grain?

[*Antistrophe.*]

'Tis Time, Time, desireless, hath shown thee what thou art;
The long monstrous mating, it is judged and all its race.

O child of him that sleepeth,

Thy land weepeth, weepeth,

Unfathered. . . . Would God, I had never seen thy face!
From thee in great peril fell peace upon my heart,

In thee mine eye clouded and the dark is come apace.

[*A MESSENGER rushes out from the Palace.*]

MESSENGER.

O ye above this land in honour old
Exalted, what a tale shall ye be told,
What sights shall see, and tears of horror shed,
If still your hearts be true to them that led
Your sires! There runs no river, well I ween,
Not Phasis nor great Ister, shall wash clean
This house of all within that hideth—nay;
Nor all that creepeth forth to front the day,
Of purposed horror. And in misery
That woundeth most which men have willed to be.

LEADER.

No lack there was in what we knew before
Of food for heaviness. What bring'st thou more?

MESSENGER.

One thing I bring thee first. . . . 'Tis quickly said,
Jocasta, our anointed queen, is dead.

LEADER.

Unhappy woman! How came death to her?

MESSENGER.

By her own hand. . . . Oh, of what passed in there
Ye have been spared the worst. Ye cannot see.
Howbeit, with that which still is left in me
Of mind and memory, ye shall hear her fate.

Like one entranced with passion, through the gate
She passed, the white hands flashing o'er her head,
Like blades that tear, and fled, unswerving fled,
Toward her old bridal room, and disappeared
And the doors crashed behind her. But we heard
Her voice within, crying to him of old,
Her Laius, long dead; and things untold
Of the old kiss unforgotten, that should bring
The lover's death and leave the loved a thing
Of horror, yea, a field beneath the plough
For sire and son: then wailing bitter-low
Across that bed of births unreconciled,
Husband from husband born and child from child.
And, after that, I know not how her death
Found her. For sudden, with a roar of wrath,
Burst Oedipus upon us. Then, I ween,
We marked no more what passion held the Queen,
But him, as in the fury of his stride,
"A sword! A sword! And show me here," he cried,
"That wife, no wife, that field of bloodstained earth
Where husband, father, sin on sin, had birth,
Polluted generations!" While he thus
Raged on, some god—for sure 'twas none of us—
Showed where she was; and with a shout away,
As though some hand had pointed to the prey,
He dashed him on the chamber door. The straight
Door-bar of oak, it bent beneath his weight,
Shook from its sockets free, and in he burst
To the dark chamber.

There we saw her first
Hanged, swinging from a noose, like a dead bird.
He fell back when he saw her. Then we heard

A miserable groan, and straight he found
And loosed the strangling knot, and on the ground
Laid her.—Ah, then the sight of horror came!
The pin of gold, broad-beaten like a flame,
He tore from off her breast, and, left and right,
Down on the shuddering orbits of his sight
Dashed it: "Out! Out! Ye never more shall see
Me nor the anguish nor the sins of me.
Ye looked on lives whose like earth never bore,
Ye knew not those my spirit thirsted for:
Therefore be dark for ever!"

Like a song
His voice rose, and again, again the strong
And stabbing hand fell, and the massacred
And bleeding eyeballs streamed upon his beard,
Wild rain, and gouts of hail amid the rain.

Behold affliction, yea, afflictions twain
From man and woman broken, now made one
In downfall. All the riches yester sun
Saw in this house were rich in verity.
What call ye now our riches? Agony,
Delusion, Death, Shame, all that eye or ear
Hath ever dreamed of misery, is here.

LEADER.

And now how fares he? Doth the storm abate?

MESSENGER.

He shouts for one to open wide the gate
And lead him forth, and to all Thebes display
His father's murderer, his mother's. . . . Nay,
Such words I will not speak. And his intent
Is set, to cast himself in banishment
Out to the wild, not walk 'mid human breed
Bearing the curse he bears. Yet sore his need
Of strength and of some guiding hand. For sure
He hath more burden now than man may endure.

But see, the gates fall back, and that appears
Which he who loathes shall pity—yea, with tears.

[OEDIPUS is led in, blinded and bleeding. *The Old Men*
bow down and hide their faces; some of them weep.]

CHORUS.

Oh, terrible! Oh, sight of all
This life hath crossed, most terrible!
Thou man more wronged than tongue can tell,
What madness took thee? Do there crawl
Live Things of Evil from the deep
To leap on man? Oh, what a leap
Was His that flung thee to thy fall!

LEADER.

O fallen, fallen in ghastly case,
I dare not raise mine eyes to thee;
Fain would I look and ask and see,
But shudder sickened from thy face.

OEDIPUS.

Oh, pain; pain and woe!
Whither? Whither?
They lead me and I go;
And my voice drifts on the air
Far away.
Where, Thing of Evil, where
Endeth thy leaping hither?

LEADER.

In fearful ends, which none may hear nor say.

OEDIPUS.

Cloud of the dark, mine own [Strophe.]
For ever, horrible,
Stealing, stealing, silent, unconquerable,
Cloud that no wind, no summer can dispel!

Again, again I groan,
As through my heart together crawl the strong
Stabs of this pain and memories of old wrong.

LEADER.

Yea, twofold hosts of torment hast thou there,
The stain to think on and the pain to bear.

OEDIPUS.

O Friend, thou mine own [Antistrophe.]

Still faithful, minister

Steadfast abiding alone of them that were,

Dost bear with me and give the blind man care?

Ah me! Not all unknown

Nor hid thou art. Deep in this dark a call

Comes and I know thy voice in spite of all.

LEADER.

O fearful sufferer, and could'st thou kill

Thy living orbs? What God made blind thy will?

OEDIPUS.

'Tis Apollo; all is Apollo,

[Strophe.]

O ye that love me, 'tis he long time hath planned

These things upon me evilly, evilly,

Dark things and full of blood.

I knew not; I did but follow

His way; but mine the hand

And mine the anguish. What were mine eyes to me

When naught to be seen was good?

LEADER.

'Tis even so; and Truth doth speak in thee.

OEDIPUS.

To see, to endure, to hear words kindly spoken,

Should I have joy in such?

Out, if ye love your breath,

Cast me swift unto solitude, unbroken

By word or touch.

Am I not charged with death,

Most charged and filled to the brim

With curses? And what man saith

God hath so hated him?

LEADER.

Thy bitter will, thy hard calamity,
Would I had never known nor looked on thee!

OEDIPUS.

My curse, my curse upon him, [Antistrophe.]
That man whom pity held in the wilderness,
Who saved the feet alive from the blood-fetter
And loosed the barb thereof!
That babe—what grace was done him,
Had he died shelterless,
He had not laid on himself this grief to bear,
And all who gave him love.

LEADER.

I, too, O Friend, I had been happier.

OEDIPUS.

Found not the way to his father's blood, nor shaken
The world's scorn on his mother,
The child and the groom withal;
But now, of murderers born, of God forsaken,
Mine own sons' brother;
All this, and if aught can fall
Upon man more perilous
And elder in sin, lo, all
Is the portion of Oedipus.

LEADER.

How shall I hold this counsel or thy mind
True? Thou wert better dead than living blind.

OEDIPUS.

That this deed is not well and wisely wrought
Thou shalt not show me; therefore school me not.
Think, with what eyes hereafter in the place
Of shadows could I see my father's face,
Or my poor mother's? Both of whom this hand
Hath wronged too deep for man to understand.

Or children—born as mine were born, to see
Their shapes should bring me joy? Great God! To me
There is no joy in city nor in tower
Nor temple, from all whom, in this mine hour,
I that was chief in Thebes alone, and ate
The King's bread, I have made me separate
For ever. Mine own lips have bid the land
Cast from it one so evil, one whose hand
To sin was dedicate, whom God hath shown
Birth-branded . . . and my blood the dead King's own!
All this myself have proved. And can I then
Look with straight eyes into the eyes of men?
I trow not. Nay, if any stop there were
To dam this fount that wellet in mine ear
For hearing, I had never blenched nor stayed
Till this vile shell were all one dungeon made,
Dark, without sound. 'Tis thus the mind would fain
Find peace, self-prisoned from a world of pain.

O wild Kithairon, why was it thy will
To save me? Why not take me quick and kill,
Kill, before ever I could make men know
The thing I am, the thing from which I grow?
Thou dead King, Polybus, thou city wall
Of Corinth, thou old castle I did call
My father's, what a life did ye begin,
What splendour rotted by the worm within,
When ye bred me! O Crossing of the Roads,
O secret glen and dusk of crowding woods,
O narrow footpath creeping to the brink
Where meet the Three! I gave you blood to drink.
Do ye remember? 'Twas my life-blood, hot
From mine own father's heart. Have ye forgot
What deed I did among you, and what new
And direr deed I fled from you to do?
O flesh, horror of flesh! . . .

But what is shame
To do should not be spoken. In God's name,

Take me somewhere far off and cover me
From sight, or slay, or cast me to the sea
Where never eye may see me any more.

What? Do ye fear to touch a man so sore
Stricken? Nay, tremble not. My misery
Is mine, and shall be borne by none but me.

LEADER.

Lo, yonder comes for answer to thy prayer
Creon, to do and to decree. The care
Of all our land is his, now thou art weak.

OEDIPUS.

Alas, what word to Creon can I speak,
How make him trust me more? He hath seen of late
So vile a heart in me, so full of hate.

[*Enter CREON.*]

CREON.

Not to make laughter, Oedipus, nor cast
Against thee any evil of the past
I seek thee, but . . . Ah God! ye ministers,
Have ye no hearts? Or if for man there stirs
No pity in you, fear at least to call
Stain on our Lord the Sun, who feedeth all;
Nor show in nakedness a horror such
As this, which never mother Earth may touch,
Nor God's clean rain nor sunlight. Quick within!
Guide him.—The ills that in a house have been
They of the house alone should know or hear.

OEDIPUS.

In God's name, since thou hast undone the fear
Within me, coming thus, all nobleness,
To one so vile, grant me one only grace.
For thy sake more I crave it than mine own.

CREON.

Let me first hear what grace thou wouldst be shown.

OEDIPUS.

Cast me from Thebes . . . now, quick . . . where none may
see

My visage more, nor mingle words with me.

CREON.

That had I done, for sure, save that I still
Tremble, and fain would ask Apollo's will.

OEDIPUS.

His will was clear enough, to stamp the unclean
Thing out, the bloody hand, the heart of sin.

CREON.

'Twas thus he seemed to speak; but in this sore
Strait we must needs learn surer than before.

OEDIPUS.

Thou needs must trouble God for one so low?

CREON.

Surely; thyself will trust his answer now.

OEDIPUS.

I charge thee more . . . and, if thou fail, my sin
Shall cleave to thee. . . . For her who lies within,
Make as thou wilt her burial. 'Tis thy task
To tend thine own. But me: let no man ask
This ancient city of my sires to give
Harbour in life to me. Set me to live
On the wild hills and leave my name to those
Deepes of Kithairon which my father chose,
And mother, for my vast and living tomb.
As they, my murderers, willed it, let my doom
Find me. For this my very heart doth know,
No sickness now, nor any mortal blow,
Shall slay this body. Never had my breath
Been thus kept burning in the midst of death,

Save for some frightful end. So, let my way
Go where it listeth.

But my children—Nay,
Creon, my sons will ask thee for no care.
Men are they, and can find them everywhere
What life needs. But my two poor desolate
Maidens. . . . There was no table ever set
Apart for them, but whatso royal fare
I tasted, they were with me and had share
In all. . . . Creon, I pray, forget them not.
And if it may be, go, bid them be brought,

[CREON goes and presently returns with the two princesses. OEDIPUS thinks he is there all the time.]

That I may touch their faces, and so weep. . . .

Go, Prince. Go, noble heart! . . .

If I might touch them, I should seem to keep

And not to have lost them, now mine eyes are gone. . . .

What say I?

In God's name, can it be I hear mine own

Beloved ones sobbing? Creon of his grace

Hath brought my two, my dearest, to this place.

Is it true?

CREON.

'Tis true. I brought them, for in them I know

Thy joy is, the same now as long ago.

OEDIPUS.

God bless thee, and in this hard journey give
Some better guide than mine to help thee live.

Children! Where are ye? Hither; come to these
Arms of your . . . brother, whose wild offices
Have brought much darkness on the once bright eyes
Of him who grew your garden; who, nowise
Seeing nor understanding, digged a ground
The world shall shudder at. Children, my wound
Is yours too, and I cannot meet your gaze
Now, as I think me what remaining days

Of bitter living the world hath for you.
 What dance of damsels shall ye gather to,
 What feast of Thebes, but quick ye shall turn home,
 All tears, or ere the feast or dancers come?
 And, children, when ye reach the years of love,
 Who shall dare wed you, whose heart rise above
 The peril, to take on him all the shame
 That cleaves to my name and my children's name?
 God knows, it is enough! . . .
 My flowers, ye needs must die, waste things, bereft
 And fruitless.

Creon, thou alone art left
 Their father now, since both of us are gone
 Who cared for them. Oh, leave them not alone
 To wander masterless, these thine own kin,
 And beggared. Neither think of them such sin
 As ye all know in me, but let their fate
 Touch thee. So young they are, so desolate—
 Of all save thee. True man, give me thine hand,
 And promise.

[OEDIPUS and CREON clasp hands.]

If your age could understand,
 Children, full many counsels I could give.
 But now I leave this one word: Pray to live
 As life may suffer you, and find a road
 To travel easier than your father trod.

CREON.

Enough thy heart hath poured its tears; now back into thine
 house repair.

OEDIPUS.

I dread the house, yet go I must.

CREON.

Fair season maketh all things fair.

OEDIPUS.

One oath then give me, and I go.

CREON.

Name it, and I will answer thee.

OEDIPUS.

To cast me from this land.

CREON.

A gift not mine but God's thou askest me.

OEDIPUS.

I am a thing of God abhorred.

CREON.

The more, then, will he grant thy prayer.

OEDIPUS.

Thou givest thine oath?

CREON.

I see no light; and, seeing not, I may not swear.

OEDIPUS.

Then take me hence. I care not.

CREON.

Go in peace, and give these children o'er.

OEDIPUS.

Ah no! Take not away my daughters!

[They are taken from him.]

CREON.

Seek not to be master more.

Did not thy masteries of old forsake thee when the end was
near?

CHORUS.

Ye citizens of Thebes, behold; 'tis Oedipus that passeth here,
Who read the riddle-word of Death, and mightiest stood of
mortal men,

And Fortune loved him, and the folk that saw him turned
and looked again.

Lo, he is fallen, and around great storms and the outreaching
sea!

Therefore, O Man, beware, and look toward the end of things
that be,

The last of sights, the last of days; and no man's life account
as gain

Ere the full tale be finished and the darkness find him with-
out pain.

[OEDIPUS *is led into the house and the doors close on
him.*]

THE TROJAN WOMEN

(415 B.C.)

BY

EURIPIDES

Translated by Sir Gilbert Murray

Copyright by Oxford University Press,
American Branch,
and reprinted by special permission
of the Translator and the Publishers.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

THE GOD POSEIDON.

THE GODDESS PALLAS ATHENA.

HECUBA, *Queen of Troy, wife of Priam, mother of Hector and Paris.*

CASSANDRA, *daughter of Hecuba, a prophetess.*

ANDROMACHE, *wife of Hector, Prince of Troy.*

HELEN, *wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta; carried off by Paris, Prince of Troy.*

TALTHYBIUS, *Herald of the Greeks.*

MENELAUS, *King of Sparta, and, together with his brother Agamemnon, General of the Greeks.*

SOLDIERS ATTENDANT ON TALTHYBIUS AND MENELAUS.

CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN WOMEN, YOUNG AND OLD, MAIDEN, AND MARRIED.

THE TROJAN WOMEN

The scene represents a battlefield, a few days after the battle.

At the back are the walls of Troy, partially ruined. In front of them, to right and left, are some huts, containing those of the Captive Women who have been specially set apart for the chief Greek leaders. At one side some dead bodies of armed men are visible. In front a tall woman with white hair is lying on the ground asleep.

It is the dusk of early dawn, before sunrise. The figure of the god POSEIDON is dimly seen before the walls.

POSEIDON.

Up from Aegean caverns, pool by pool
Of blue salt sea, where feet most beautiful
Of Nereïd maidens weave beneath the foam
Their long sea-dances, I, their lord, am come,
Poseidon of the Sea. 'Twas I whose power,
With great Apollo, builded tower by tower
These walls of Troy; and still my care doth stand
True to the ancient People of my hand;
Which now as smoke is perished, in the shock
Of Argive spears. Down from Parnassus' rock
The Greek Epeios came, of Phocian seed,
And wrought by Pallas' mysteries a Steed
Marvellous, big with arms; and through my wall
It passed, a death-fraught image magical.

The groves are empty and the sanctuaries
Run red with blood. Unburied Priam lies
By his own hearth, on God's high altar-stair,
And Phrygian gold goes forth and raiment rare
To the Argive ships; and weary soldiers roam
Waiting the wind that blows at last for home,

For wives and children, left long years away,
 Beyond the seed's tenth fullness and decay,
 To work this land's undoing.

And for me,
 Since Argive Hera conquereth, and she
 Who wrought with Hera to the Phrygians' woe,
 Pallas, behold, I bow mine head and go
 Forth from great Ilion and mine altars old.
 When a still city lieth in the hold
 Of Desolation, all God's spirit there
 Is sick and turns from worship.—Hearken where
 The ancient River waileth with a voice
 Of many women, portioned by the choice
 Of war amid new lords, as the lots leap
 For Thessaly, or Argos, or the steep
 Of Theseus' Rock. And others yet there are,
 High women, chosen from the waste of war
 For the great kings, behind these portals hid;
 And with them that Laconian Tyndarid,
 Helen, like them a prisoner and a prize.

And this unhappy one—would any eyes
 Gaze now on Hecuba? Here at the Gates
 She lies 'mid many tears for many fates
 Of wrong. One child beside Achilles' grave
 In secret slain, Polyxena the brave,
 Lies bleeding. Priam and his sons are gone;
 And, lo, Cassandra, she the Chosen One,
 Whom Lord Apollo spared to walk her way
 A swift and virgin spirit, on this day
 Lust hath her, and she goeth garlanded
 A bride of wrath to Agamemnon's bed.

[*He turns to go; and another divine Presence becomes visible in the dusk. It is the goddess PALLAS ATHENA.*]

O happy long ago, farewell, farewell,
 Ye shining towers and mine old citadel;
 Broken by Pallas, Child of God, or still
 Thy roots had held thee true.

PALLAS.

Is it the will
Of God's high Brother, to whose hand is given
Great power of old, and worship of all Heaven,
To suffer speech from one whose enmities
This day are cast aside?

POSEIDON.

His will it is:
Kindred and long companionship withal,
Most high Athena, are things magical.

PALLAS.

Blest be thy gentle mood!—Methinks I see
A road of comfort here, for thee and me.

POSEIDON.

Thou hast some counsel of the Gods, or word
Spoken of Zeus? Or is it tidings heard
From some far Spirit?

PALLAS.

For this Ilion's sake,
Whereon we tread, I seek thee, and would make
My hand as thine.

POSEIDON.

Hath that old hate and deep
Failed, where she lieth in her ashen sleep?
Thou pitiest her?

PALLAS.

Speak first; wilt thou be one
In heart with me and hand till all be done?

POSEIDON.

Yea; but lay bare thy heart. For this land's sake
Thou comest, not for Hellas?

PALLAS.

I would make
Mine ancient enemies laugh for joy, and bring
On these Greek ships a bitter homecoming.

POSEIDON.

Swift is thy spirit's path, and strange withal,
And hot thy love and hate, where'er they fall.

PALLAS.

A deadly wrong they did me, yea within
Mine holy place: thou knowest?

POSEIDON.

I know the sin
Of Ajax, when he cast Cassandra down . . .

PALLAS

And no man rose and smote him; not a frown
Nor word from all the Greeks!

POSEIDON.

And 'twas thine hand
That gave them Troy!

PALLAS.

Therefore with thee I stand
To smite them.

POSEIDON.

All thou cravest, even now
Is ready in mine heart. What seekest thou?

PALLAS.

An homecoming that striveth ever more
And cometh to no home.

POSEIDON.

Here on the shore
Wouldst hold them or amid mine own salt foam?

PALLAS.

When the last ship hath bared her sail for home!

Zeus shall send rain, long rain and flaw of driven
Hail, and a whirling darkness blown from heaven;
To me his levin-light he promiseth
O'er ships and men, for scourging and hot death:
Do thou make wild the roads of the sea, and steep
With war of waves and yawning of the deep,
Till dead men choke Euboea's curling bay.
So Greece shall dread even in an after day
My house, nor scorn the Watchers of strange lands!

POSEIDON.

I give thy boon unbartered. These mine hands
Shall stir the waste Aegean; reefs that cross
The Delian pathways, jag-torn Myconos,
Scyros and Lemnos, yea, and storm-driven
Caphêreus with the bones of drownèd men
Shall glut him.—Go thy ways, and bid the Sire
Yield to thine hand the arrows of his fire.
Then wait thine hour, when the last ship shall wind
Her cable coil for home!

[*Exit PALLAS.*]

How are ye blind,
Ye treaders down of cities, ye that cast
Temples to desolation, and lay waste
Tombs, the untrodden sanctuaries where lie
The ancient dead; yourselves so soon to die! [*Exit POSEIDON.*]

[*The day slowly dawns: HEBUCA wakes.*]

HECUBA.

Up from the earth, O weary head!

This is not Troy, about, above—

Not Troy, nor we the lords thereof.

Thou breaking neck, be strengthenèd!

Endure and chafe not. The winds rave

And falter. Down the world's wide road,

Float, float where streams the breath of God;
Nor turns thy prow to breast the wave.

Ah woe! . . . For what woe lacketh here?

My children lost, my land, my lord.

O thou great wealth of glory, stored
Of old in Ilion, year by year

We watched . . . and wert thou nothingness?

What is there that I fear to say?

And yet, what help? . . . Ah, well-a-day,
This ache of lying, comfortless

And haunted! Ah, my side, my brow

And temples! All with changeful pain

My body rocketh, and would fain
Move to the tune of tears that flow:

For tears are music too, and keep

A song unheard in hearts that weep.

[*She rises and gazes towards the Greek ships far off on
the shore.*]

O ships, O crowding faces

Of ships, O hurrying beat

Of oars as of crawling feet,

How found ye our holy places?

Threading the narrows through,

Out from the gulfs of the Greek,

Out to the clear dark blue,

With hate ye came and with joy,

And the noise of your music flew,

Clarion and pipe did shriek,

As the coiled cords ye threw,

Held in the heart of Troy!

What sought ye then that ye came?

A woman, a thing abhorred:

A King's wife that her lord

Hateth: and Castor's shame

Is hot for her sake, and the reeds

Of old Eurôtas stir

With the noise of the name of her.
 She slew mine ancient King,
 The Sower of fifty Seeds,
 And cast forth mine and me,
 As shipwrecked men, that cling
 To a reef in an empty sea.

Who am I that I sit
 Here at a Greek king's door,
 Yea, in the dust of it?
 A slave that men drive before,
 A woman that hath no home,
 Weeping alone for her dead;
 A low and bruised head,
 And the glory struck therefrom.
*[She starts up from her solitary broodings, and calls
 to the other Trojan Women in the huts.]*

O Mothers of the Brazen Spear,
 And maidens, maidens, brides of shame,
 Troy is a smoke, a dying flame;
 Together we will weep for her:
 I call ye as a wide-wing'd bird
 Calleth the children of her fold,
 To cry, ah, not the cry men heard
 In Ilion, not the songs of old,
 That echoed when my hand was true
 On Priam's sceptre, and my feet
 Touched on the stone one signal beat,
 And out the Dardan music rolled;
 And Troy's great Gods gave ear thereto.
*[The door of one of the huts on the right opens, and
 the Women steal out severally, startled and afraid.]*

FIRST WOMAN.

[Strophe 1.]

How say'st thou? Whither moves thy cry,
 Thy bitter cry? Behind our door
 We heard thy heavy heart outpour

Its sorrow: and there shivered by
 Fear and a quick sob shaken
 From prisoned hearts that shall be free no more!

HECUBA.

Child, 'tis the ships that stir upon the shore . . .

SECOND WOMAN.

The ships, the ships awaken!

THIRD WOMAN.

Dear God, what would they? Overseas
 Bear me afar to strange cities?

HECUBA.

Nay, child, I know not. Dreams are these,
 Fears of the hope-forsaken.

FIRST WOMAN.

Awake, O daughters of affliction, wake
 And learn your lots! Even now the Argives break
 Their camp for sailing!

HECUBA.

Ah, not Cassandra! Wake not her
 Whom God hath maddened, lest the foe
 Mock at her dreaming. Leave me clear
 From that one edge of woe.
 O Troy, my Troy, thou diest here
 Most lonely; and most lonely we
 The living wander forth from thee,
 And the dead leave thee wailing!

[*One of the huts on the left is now open, and the rest
 of the CHORUS come out severally. Their num-
 ber eventually amounts to fifteen.*]

FOURTH WOMAN.

[*Antistrophe 1.*]

Out of the tent of the Greek king
 I steal, my Queen, with trembling breath:
 What means thy call? Not death; not death!
 They would not slay so low a thing!

FIFTH WOMAN.

O, 'tis the ship-folk crying
To deck the galleys: and we part, we part!

HECUBA.

Nay, daughter: take the morning to thine heart.

FIFTH WOMAN.

My heart with dread is dying!

SIXTH WOMAN.

An herald from the Greek hath come!

FIFTH WOMAN.

How have they cast me, and to whom
A bondmaid?

HECUBA.

Peace, child: wait thy doom.

Our lots are near the trying.

FOURTH WOMAN.

Argos, belike, or Phthia shall it be,
Or some lone island of the tossing sea,
Far, far from Troy?

HECUBA.

And I the agèd, where go I,
A winter-frozen bee, a slave
Death-shapen, as the stones that lie
Hewn on a dead man's grave:
The children of mine enemy
To foster, or keep watch before
The threshold of a master's door,
I that was Queen in Troy!

A WOMAN TO ANOTHER.

[*Strophe 2.*]

And thou, what tears can tell thy doom?

THE OTHER.

The shuttle still shall flit and change

Beneath my fingers, but the loom,
Sister, be strange.

ANOTHER (*wildly*).

Look, my dead child! My child, my love,
The last look. . . .

ANOTHER. Oh, there cometh worse.
A Greek's bed in the dark. . . .

ANOTHER. God curse
That night and all the powers thereof!

ANOTHER.

Or pitchers to and fro to bear
To some Pirênê on the hill,
Where the proud water craveth still
Its broken-hearted minister.

ANOTHER.

God guide me yet to Theseus' land,
The gentle land, the famed afar . . .

ANOTHER.

But not the hungry foam—Ah, never!—
Of fierce Eurotas, Helen's river,
To bow to Menelaus' hand,
That wasted Troy with war!

A WOMAN.

[*Antistrophe 2.*]

They told us of a land high-born,
Where glimmers round Olympus' roots
A lordly river, red with corn
And burdened fruits.

ANOTHER.

Aye, that were next in my desire
To Athens, where good spirits dwell . . .

ANOTHER.

Or Aetna's breast, the deeps of fire
That front the Tyrian's Citadel:
First mother, she, of Sicily
And mighty mountains: fame hath told
Their crowns of goodness manifold. . . .

ANOTHER.

And, close beyond the narrowing sea,
A sister land, where float enchanted
Ionian summits, wave on wave,
And Crathis of the burning tresses
Makes red the happy vale, and blesses
With gold of fountains spirit-haunted
Homes of true men and brave!

LEADER.

But lo, who cometh: and his lips
Grave with the weight of dooms unknown:
A Herald from the Grecian ships.
Swift comes he, hot-foot to be done
And finished. Ah, what bringeth he
Of news or judgment? Slaves are we,
Spoils that the Greek hath won!
[TALTHYBIUS, followed by some Soldiers, enters from
the left.]

TALTHYBIUS.

Thou know'st me, Hecuba. Often have I crossed
Thy plain with tidings from the Hellene host.
'Tis I, Talthybius. . . . Nay, of ancient use
Thou know'st me. And I come to bear thee news.

HECUBA.

Ah me, 'tis here, 'tis here,
Women of Troy, our long embosomed fear!

TALTHYBIUS.

The lots are cast, if that it was ye feared.

HECUBA.

What lord, what land. . . . Ah me,
Phthia or Thebes, or sea-worn Thessaly?

TALTHYBIUS.

Each hath her own. Ye go not in one herd.

HECUBA.

Say then what lot hath any? What of joy
Falls, or can fall, on any child of Troy?

TALTHYBIUS.

I know: but make thy questions severally.

HECUBA.

My stricken one must be
Still first. Say how Cassandra's portion lies.

TALTHYBIUS.

Chosen from all for Agamemnon's prize!

HECUBA.

How, for his Spartan bride
A tirewoman? For Helen's sister's pride?

TALTHYBIUS.

Nay, nay: a bride herself, for the King's bed.

HECUBA.

The sainted of Apollo? And her own
Prize that God promised
Out of the golden clouds, her virgin crown? . . .

TALTHYBIUS.

He loved her for that same strange holiness.

HECUBA.

Daughter, away, away,
Cast all away,
The haunted Keys, the lonely stole's array
That kept thy body like a sacred place!

TALTHYBIUS.

Is't not rare fortune that the King hath smiled
On such a maid?

HECUBA.

What of that other child
Ye reft from me but now?

TALTHYBIUS (*speaking with some constraint*).
Polyxena? Or what child meanest thou?

HECUBA.

The same. What man now hath her, or what doom?

TALTHYBIUS.

She rests apart, to watch Achilles' tomb.

HECUBA.

To watch a tomb? My daughter? What is this? . . .
Speak, Friend? What fashion of the laws of Greece?

TALTHYBIUS.

Count thy maid happy! She hath naught of ill
To fear . . .

HECUBA.

What meanest thou? She liveth still?

TALTHYBIUS.

I mean, she hath one toil that holds her free
From all toil else.

HECUBA.

What of Andromache,
Wife of mine iron-hearted Hector, where
Journeyeth she?

TALTHYBIUS.

Pyrrhus, Achilles' son, hath taken her.

HECUBA.

And I, whose slave am I,
The shaken head, the arm that creepeth by,
Staff-crutchèd, like to fall?

TALTHYBIUS.

Odysseus, Ithaca's king, hath thee for thrall.

HECUBA.

Beat, beat the crownless head;
 Rend the cheek till the tears run red!
 A lying man and a pitiless
 Shall be lord of me, a heart full-flown

With scorn of righteousness:

O heart of a beast where law is none,
 Where all things change so that lust be fed,
 The oath and the deed, the right and the wrong,
 Even the hate of the forkèd tongue:
 Even the hate turns and is cold,
 False as the love that was false of old!

O Women of Troy, weep for me!
 Yea, I am gone: I am gone my ways.
 Mine is the crown of misery,
 The bitterest day of all our days.

LEADER.

Thy fate thou knowest, Queen: but I know not
 What lord of South or North has won my lot.

TALTHYBIUS.

Go, seek Cassandra, men! Make your best speed,
 That I may leave her with the King, and lead
 These others to their divers lords. . . . Ha, there!
 What means that sudden light? Is it the flare
 Of torches?

[*Light is seen shining through the crevices of the second
hut on the right. He moves towards it.*]

Would they fire their prison rooms,
 Or how, these women?—Yes, 'fore God, the dooms
 Are known, and now they burn themselves and die
 Rather than sail with us! How savagely
 In days like these a free neck chafes beneath
 Its burden! . . . Open! Open quick! Such death

Were bliss to them, it may be: but 'twill bring
Much wrath, and leave me shamed before the King!

HECUBA.

There is no fire, no peril: 'tis my child,
Cassandra, by the breath of God made wild.

[The door opens from within and CASSANDRA enters, white-robed and wreathed like a Priestess, a great torch in her hand. She is singing softly to herself and does not see the Herald or the scene before her.]

CASSANDRA.

Lift, lift it high: [Strophe.]

Give it to mine hand!

Lo, I bear a flame

Unto God! I praise his name.

I light with a burning brand

This sanctuary.

Blessèd is he that shall wed,

And blessèd, blessèd am I

In Argos: a bride to lie

With a king in a king's bed.

Hail, O Hymen red,

O Torch that makest one!

Weepst thou, Mother mine own?

Surely thy cheek is pale

With tears, tears that wail

For a land and a father dead.

But I go garlanded:

I am the Bride of Desire:

Therefore my torch is borne—

Lo, the lifting of morn,

Lo, the leaping of fire!—

For thee, O Hymen bright,

For thee, O Moon of the Deep,

So Law hath charged, for the light

Of a maid's last sleep.

Awake, O my feet, awake:

[*Antistrophe.*]

Our father's hope is won!

Dance as the dancing skies

Over him, where he lies

Happy beneath the sun! . . .

Lo, the Ring that I make . . .

[*She makes a circle round her with a torch, and visions appear to her.*]

Apollo! . . . Ah, is it thou?

O shrine in the laurels cold,

I bear thee still, as of old,

Mine incense! Be near to me now.

[*She waves the torch as though bearing incense.*]

O Hymen, Hymen fleet:

Quick torch that makest one! . . .

How? Am I still alone?

Laugh as I laugh, and twine

In the dance, O Mother mine:

Dear feet, be near my feet!

Come, greet ye Hymen, greet

Hymen with songs of pride:

Sing to him loud and long,

Cry, cry, when the song

Failleth, for joy of the bride!

O Damsels girt in the gold

Of Ilion, cry, cry ye,

For him that is doomed of old

To be lord of me!

LEADER.

O hold the damsel, lest her trancèd feet

Lift her afar, Queen, toward the Hellene fleet!

HECUBA.

O Fire, Fire, where men make marriages

Surely thou hast thy lot; but what are these

Thou bringest flashing? Torches savage-wild
And far from mine old dreams.—Alas, my child,
How little dreamed I then of wars or red
Spears of the Greek to lay thy bridal bed!
Give me thy brand; it hath no holy blaze
Thus in thy frenzy flung. Nor all thy days
Nor all thy griefs have changed them yet, nor learned
Wisdom.—Ye women, bear the pine half burned
To the chamber back; and let your drownèd eyes
Answer the music of these bridal cries!

[She takes the torch and gives it to one of the women.]

CASSANDRA.

O Mother, fill mine hair with happy flowers,
And speed me forth. Yea, if my spirit cowers,
Drive me with wrath! So liveth Loxias,
A bloodier bride than ever Helen was
Go I to Agamemnon, Lord most high
Of Hellas! . . . I shall kill him, mother; I
Shall kill him, and lay waste his house with fire
As he laid ours. My brethren and my sire
Shall win again . . .

(Checking herself) But part I must let be,
And speak not. Not the axe that craveth me,
And more than me; not the dark wanderings
Of mother-murder that my bridal brings,
And all the House of Atreus down, down, down . . .

Nay, I will show thee. Even now this town
Is happier than the Greeks. I know the power
Of God is on me: but this little hour,
Wilt thou but listen, I will hold him back!

One love, one woman's beauty, o'er the track
Of hunted Helen, made their myriads fall.
And this their King so wise, who ruleth all,
What wrought he? Cast out Love that Hate might feed:
Gave to his brother his own child, his seed
Of gladness, that a woman fled, and fain
To fly for ever, should be turned again!

So the days waned, and armies on the shore
 Of Simois stood and strove and died. Wherefore?
 No man had moved their landmarks; none had shook
 Their wallèd towns.—And they whom Ares took,
 Had never seen their children: no wife came
 With gentle arms to shroud the limbs of them
 For burial, in a strange and angry earth
 Laid dead. And there at home, the same long dearth:
 Women that lonely died, and aged men
 Waiting for sons that ne'er should turn again,
 Nor know their graves, nor pour drink-offerings,
 To still the unslakèd dust. These be the things
 The conquering Greek hath won!

But we—what pride,
 What praise of men were sweeter?—fighting died
 To save our people. And when war was red
 Around us, friends upbore the gentle dead
 Home, and dear women's hands about them wound
 White shrouds, and here they sleep in the old ground
 Belovèd. And the rest long days fought on,
 Dwelling with wives and children, not alone
 And joyless, like these Greeks.

And Hector's woe,
 What is it? He is gone, and all men know
 His glory, and how true a heart he bore.
 It is the gift the Greek hath brought! Of yore
 Men saw him not, nor knew him. Yea, and even
 Paris hath loved withal a child of heaven:
 Else had his love but been as others are.

Would ye be wise, ye Cities, fly from war!
 Yet if war come, there is a crown in death
 For her that striveth well and perisheth
 Unstained: to die in evil were the stain!
 Therefore, O Mother, pity not thy slain,
 Nor Troy, nor me, the bride. Thy direst foe
 And mine by this my wooing is brought low.

TALTHYBIUS (*at last breaking through the spell that has
 held him*).

I swear, had not Apollo made thee mad,
Not lightly hadst thou flung this shower of bad
Bodings, to speed my General o'er the seas!

'Fore God, the wisdoms and the greatnesses
Of seeming, are they hollow all, as things
Of naught? This son of Atreus, of all kings
Most mighty, hath so bowed him to the love
Of this mad maid, and chooseth her above
All women! By the Gods, rude though I be,
I would not touch her hand!

Look thou; I see
Thy lips are blind, and whatso words they speak,
Praises of Troy or shamings of the Greek,
I cast to the four winds! Walk at my side
In peace! . . . And heaven content him of his bride!

*[He moves as though to go, but turns to HECUBA, and
speaks more gently.]*

And thou shalt follow to Odysseus' host
When the word comes. 'Tis a wise queen thou go'st
To serve, and gentle: so the Ithacans say.

CASSANDRA (*seeing for the first time the Herald
and all the scene*).

How fierce a slave! . . . O Heralds, Heralds! Yea,
Voices of Death; and mists are over them
Of dead men's anguish, like a diadem,
These weak abhorred things that serve the hate
Of kings and peoples! . . .

To Odysseus' gate
My mother goeth, say'st thou? Is God's word
As naught, to me in silence ministered,
That in this place she dies? . . . (*To herself*.) No more; no
more!

Why should I speak the shame of them, before
They come? . . . Little he knows, that hard-beset
Spirit, what deeps of dole await him yet;
Till all these tears of ours and harrowings
Of Troy, by his, shall be as golden things.

Ten years behind ten years athwart his way
Waiting: and home, lost and unfriended . . .

Nay:

Why should Odysseus' labours vex my breath?
On; hasten; guide me to the house of Death,
To lie beside my bridegroom! . . .

Thou Greek King,
Who deem'st thy fortune now so high a thing,
Thou dust of the earth, a lowlier bed I see,
In darkness, not in light, awaiting thee:
And with thee, with thee . . . there, where yawneth plain
A rift of the hills, raging with winter rain,
Dead . . . and out-cast . . . and naked . . . It is I
Beside my bridegroom: and the wild beasts cry,
And ravin on God's chosen!

[She clasps her hands to her brow and feels the wreaths.]

O, ye wreaths!

Ye garlands of my God, whose love yet breathes
About me; shapes of joyance mystical;
Begone! I have forgot the festival,
Forgot the joy. Begone! I tear ye, so,
From off me! . . . Out on the swift winds they go.
With flesh still clean I give them back to thee,
Still white, O God, O light that ledest me!

[Turning upon the Herald.]

Where lies the galley? Whither shall I tread?
See that your watch be set, your sail be spread.
The wind comes quick! . . . Three Powers—mark me,
thou!—

There be of Hell, and one walks with thee now!

Mother, farewell, and weep not! O my sweet
City, my earth-clad brethren, and thou great
Sire that begat us; but a little now,
And I am with you: yea, with shining brow
I come, ye Dead, and shining from the fall
Of Atreus' House, the House that wrecked us all!

[She goes out, followed by TALTHYBIUS and the Soldiers;

HECUBA, *after waiting for an instant motionless, falls to the ground.*]

LEADER OF CHORUS.

The Queen, ye Watchers! See, she falls, she falls,
Rigid without a word! O sorry thralls,
Too late! And will ye leave her downstricken,
A woman, and so old? Raise her again!

[Some women go to HECUBA, but she refuses their aid and speaks without rising.]

HECUBA.

Let lie . . . the love we seek not is no love . . .
This ruined body! Is the fall thereof
Too deep for all that now is over me
Of anguish, and hath been, and yet shall be?
Ye Gods . . . Alas! Why call on things so weak
For aid? Yet there is something that doth seek,
Crying, for God, when one of us hath woe.
O, I will think of things gone long ago
And weave them to a song, like one more tear
In the heart of misery. . . . All kings we were;
And I must wed a king. And sons I brought
My lord King, many sons . . . nay, that were naught;
But high strong princes, of all Troy the best.
Hellas nor Troäs nor the garnered East
Held such a mother! And all these things beneath
The Argive spear I saw cast down in death,
And shore these tresses at the dead men's feet.

Yea, and the gardener of my garden great,
It was not any noise of him nor tale
I wept for; these eyes saw him, when the pale
Was broke, and there at the altar Priam fell
Murdered, and round him all his citadel
Sacked. And my daughters, virgins of the fold,
Meet to be brides of mighty kings, behold,
'Twas for the Greek I bred them! All are gone;
And no hope left, that I shall look upon

Their faces any more, nor they on mine.

And now my feet tread on the utmost line:
 An old, old slave-woman, I pass below
 Mine enemies' gates; and whatso task they know
 For this age basest, shall be mine; the door,
 Bowing, to shut and open. . . . I that bore
 Hector! . . . and meal to grind, and this racked head
 Bend to the stones after a royal bed;
 Torn rags about me, aye, and under them
 Torn flesh; 'twill make a woman sick for shame!
 Woe's me; and all that one man's arms might hold
 One woman, what long seas have o'er me rolled
 And roll for ever! . . . O my child, whose white
 Soul laughed amid the laughter of God's light,
 Cassandra, what hands and how strange a day
 Have loosed thy zone! And thou, Polyxena,
 Where art thou? And my sons? Not any seed
 Of man nor woman now shall help my need.

Why raise me any more? What hope have I
 To hold me? Take this slave that once trod high
 In Ilion; cast her on her bed of clay
 Rock-pillowed, to lie down, and pass away
 Wasted with tears. And whatso man they call
 Happy, believe not ere the last day fall!

CHORUS.

[*Strophe.*]

O Muse, be near me now, and make
 A strange song for Ilion's sake,
 Till a tone of tears be about mine ears
 And out of my lips a music break
 For Troy, Troy, and the end of the years:
 When the wheels of the Greek above me pressed,
 And the mighty horse-hoofs beat my breast;
 And all around were the Argive spears
 A towering Steed of golden rein—
 O gold without, dark steel within!—
 Ramped in our gates; and all the plain

Lay silent where the Greeks had been.
And a cry broke from all the folk
Gathered above on Ilion's rock:
"Up, up, O fear is over now!

To Pallas, who hath saved us living,
To Pallas bear this victory-vow!"
Then rose the old man from his room,
The merry damsel left her loom,
And each bound death about his brow
With minstrelsy and high thanksgiving!

O, swift were all in Troy that day, [*Antistrophe.*]
And girt them to the portal-way,
Marvelling at that mountain Thing
Smooth-carven, where the Argives lay,
And wrath, and Ilion's vanquishing:
Meet gift for her that spareth not,
Heaven's yokeless Rider. Up they brought
Through the steep gates her offering:
Like some dark ship that climbs the shore
On straining cables, up, where stood
Her marble throne, her hallowed floor,
Who lusted for her people's blood.

A very weariness of joy
Fell with the evening over Troy:
And lutes of Afric mingled there
With Phrygian songs: and many a maiden,
With white feet glancing light as air,
Made happy music through the gloom:
And fires on many an inward room
All night broad-flashing, flung their glare
On laughing eyes and slumber-laden.

A MAIDEN.

I was among the dancers there
To Artemis, and glorying sang
Her of the Hills, the Maid most fair,
Daughter of Zeus: and, lo, there rang

A shout out of the dark, and fell
 Deathlike from street to street, and made
 A silence in the citadel:

And a child cried, as if afraid,
 And hid him in his mother's veil.

Then stalked the Slayer from his den,
 The hand of Pallas served her well!

O blood, blood of Troy was deep
 About the streets and altars then:
 And in the wedded rooms of sleep,
 Lo, the desolate dark alone,
 And headless things, men stumbled on.

And forth, lo, the women go,
 The crown of War, the crown of Woe,
 To bear the children of the foe
 And weep, weep, for Ilion!

[*As the song ceases a chariot is seen approaching from the town, laden with spoils. On it sits a mourning Woman with a child in her arms.*]

LEADER.

Lo, yonder on the heapèd crest
 Of a Greek wain, Andromachê,
 As one that o'er an unknown sea
 Tosseth; and on her wave-borne breast
 Her loved one clingeth, Hector's child,
 Astyanax . . . O most forlorn
 Of women, whither go'st thou, borne
 'Mid Hector's bronzen arms, and piled
 Spoils of the dead, and pageantry
 Of them that hunted Ilion down?
 Aye, richly thy new lord shall crown
 The mountain shrines of Thessaly!

ANDROMACHE.

Forth to the Greek I go,
 Driven as a beast is driven.

[*Strophe 1.*]

HEC. Woe, woe!

AND. Nay, mine is woe:

Woe to none other given,
And the song and the crown therefor!

HEC. O Zeus!

AND. He hates thee sore!

HEC. Children!

AND. No more, no more
To aid thee: their strife is striven!

HECUBA.

Troy, Troy is gone! [Antistrophe 1.]

AND. Yea, and her treasure parted.

HEC. Gone, gone, mine own
Children, the noble-hearted!

AND. Sing sorrow. . . .

HEC. For me, for me!

AND. Sing for the Great City,
That falleth, falleth to be
A shadow, a fire departed.

ANDROMACHE

Come to me, O my lover! [Strophe 2.]

HEC. The dark shroudeth him over,
My flesh, woman, not thine, not thine!

AND. Make of thine arms my cover!

HECUBA.

O thou whose wound was deepest, [Antistrophe 2.]
Thou that my children keepest,
Priam, Priam, O age-worn King,
Gather me where thou sleepest.

ANDROMACHE (*her hands upon her heart.*)

[Strophe 3.]

O here is the deep of desire,
HEC. (How? And is this not woe?)

AND. For a city burned with fire;

HEC. (It beateth, blow on blow.)

AND. God's wrath for Paris, thy son, that he died not
long ago:

Who sold for his evil love
Troy and the towers thereof:
Therefore the dead men lie
Naked, beneath the eye
Of Pallas, and vultures croak
And flap for joy:
So Love hath laid his yoke
On the neck of Troy!

HECUBA.

[*Antistrophe 3.*]

O mine own land, my home,

AND. (I weep for thee, left forlorn,)

HEC. See'st thou what end is come?

AND. (And the house where my babes were born.)

HEC. A desolate Mother we leave, O children, a City of
scorn:

Even as the sound of a song
Left by the way, but long
Remembered, a tune of tears
Falling where no man hears,
In the old house, as rain,
For things loved of yore:
But the dead hath lost his pain
And weeps no more.

LEADER.

How sweet are tears to them in bitter stress,
And sorrow, and all the songs of heaviness.

ANDROMACHE.

Mother of him of old, whose mighty spear
Smote Greeks like chaff, see'st thou what things are here?

HECUBA.

I see God's hand, that buildeth a great crown
For littleness, and hath cast the mighty down.

ANDROMACHE.

I and my babe are driven among the droves
Of plundered cattle. O, when fortune moves
So swift, the high heart like a slave beats low.

HECUBA.

'Tis fearful to be helpless. Men but now
Have taken Cassandra, and I strove in vain.

ANDROMACHE.

Ah, woe is me; hath Ajax come again?
But other evil yet is at thy gate.

HECUBA.

Nay, Daughter, beyond number, beyond weight
My evils are! Doom raceth against doom.

ANDROMACHE.

Polyxena across Achilles' tomb
Lies slain, a gift flung to the dreamless dead.

HECUBA.

My sorrow! . . . 'Tis but what Talthybius said:
So plain a riddle, and I read it not.

ANDROMACHE.

I saw her lie, and stayed this chariot;
And raiment wrapt on her dead limbs, and beat
My breast for her.

HECUBA (*to herself*).

O the foul sin of it!

The wickedness! My child. My child! Again
I cry to thee. How cruelly art thou slain!

ANDROMACHE.

She hath died her death, and howso dark it be,
Her death is sweeter than my misery.

HECUBA.

Death cannot be what Life is, Child; the cup
Of Death is empty, and Life hath always hope.

ANDROMACHE.

O Mother, having ears, hear thou this word
Fear-conquering, till thy heart as mine be stirred
With joy. To die is only not to be;
And better to be dead than grievously
Living. They have no pain, they ponder not
Their own wrong. But the living that is brought
From joy to heaviness, his soul doth roam,
As in a desert, lost, from its old home.
Thy daughter lieth now as one unborn,
Dead, and naught knowing of the lust and scorn
That slew her. And I . . . long since I drew my bow
Straight at the heart of good fame; and I know
My shaft hit; and for that am I the more
Fallen from peace. All that men praise us for,
I loved for Hector's sake, and sought to win.
I knew that alway, be there hurt therein
Or utter innocence, to roam abroad
Hath ill report for women; so I trod
Down the desire thereof, and walked my way
In mine own garden. And light words and gay
Parley of women never passed my door.
The thoughts of mine own heart . . . I craved no more . . .
Spoke with me, and I was happy. Constantly
I brought fair silence and a tranquil eye
For Hector's greeting, and watched well the way
Of living, where to guide and where obey.
And, lo! some rumour of this peace, being gone
Forth to the Greek, hath cursed me. Achilles' son,
So soon as I was taken, for his thrall

Chose me. I shall do service in the hall
Of them that slew . . . How? Shall I thrust aside
Hector's belovèd face, and open wide
My heart to this new lord? Oh, I should stand
A traitor to the dead! And if my hand
And flesh shrink from him . . . lo, wrath and despite
O'er all the house, and I a slave!

One night,

One night . . . aye, men have said it . . . maketh tame
A woman in a man's arms. . . . O shame, shame!
What woman's lips can so forswear her dead,
And give strange kisses in another bed?
Why, not a dumb beast, not a colt will run
In the yoke untroubled, when her mate is gone—
A thing not in God's image, dull, unmoved
Of reason. O my Hector! best beloved,
That, being mine, wast all in all to me,
My prince, my wise one, O my majesty
Of valiance! No man's touch had ever come
Near me, when thou from out my father's home
Didst lead me and make me thine. . . . And thou art dead,
And I war-flung to slavery and the bread
Of shame in Hellas, over bitter seas!

What knoweth she of evils like to these,
That dead Polyxena, thou weepest for?
There liveth not in my life any more
The hope that others have. Nor will I tell
The lie to mine own heart, that aught is well
Or shall be well. . . . Yet, O, to dream were sweet!

LEADER.

Thy feet have trod the pathway of my feet,
And thy clear sorrow teacheth me mine own.

HECUBA.

Lo, yonder ships: I ne'er set foot on one,
But tales and pictures tell, when over them
Breaketh a storm not all too strong to stem,

Each man strives hard, the tiller gripped, the mast
 Manned, the hull baled, to face it: till at last
 Too strong breaks the o'erwhelming sea: lo, then
 They cease, and yield them up as broken men
 To fate and the wild waters. Even so
 I in my many sorrows bear me low,
 Nor curse, nor strive that other things may be.
 The great wave rolled from God hath conquered me.

But, O, let Hector and the fates that fell
 On Hector, sleep. Weep for him ne'er so well,
 Thy weeping shall not wake him. Honour thou
 The new lord that is set above thee now,
 And make of thine own gentle piety
 A prize to lure his heart. So shalt thou be
 A strength to them that love us, and—God knows,
 It may be—rear this babe among his foes,
 My Hector's child, to manhood and great aid
 For Ilion. So her stones may yet be laid
 One on another, if God will, and wrought
 Again to a city! Ah, how thought to thought
 Still beckons! . . . But what minion of the Greek
 Is this that cometh, with new words to speak?

[Enter TALTHYBIUS with a band of Soldiers. He comes
 forward slowly and with evident disquiet.]

TALTHYBIUS.

Spouse of the noblest heart that beat in Troy,
 Andromache, hate me not! 'Tis not in joy
 I tell thee. But the people and the Kings
 Have with one voice . . .

ANDROMACHE.

What is it? Evil things
 Are on thy lips!

TALTHYBIUS.

'Tis ordered, this child . . . Oh,
 How can I tell her of it?

ANDROMACHE.

Doth he not go
With me, to the same master?

TALTHYBIUS.

There is none
In Greece, shall e'er be master of thy son.

ANDROMACHE.

How? Will they leave him here to build again
The wreck? . . .

TALTHYBIUS.

I know not how to tell thee plain!

ANDROMACHE.

Thou hast a gentle heart . . . if it be ill,
And not good, news thou hidest!

TALTHYBIUS.

'Tis their will
Thy son shall die. . . . The whole vile thing is said
Now!

ANDROMACHE.

Oh, I could have borne mine enemy's bed!

TALTHYBIUS.

And speaking in the council of the host
Odysseus hath prevailed—

ANDROMACHE.

O lost! lost! lost! . . .
Forgive me! It is not easy . . .

TALTHYBIUS.

. . . That the son
Of one so perilous be not fostered on
To manhood—

ANDROMACHE.

God; may his own counsel fall

On his own sons!

TALTHYBIUS.

. . . . But from this crested wall
Of Troy be dashed, and die. . . . Nay, let the thing
Be done. Thou shalt be wiser so. Nor cling
So fiercely to him. Suffer as a brave
Woman in bitter pain; nor think to have
Strength which thou hast not. Look about thee here!
Canst thou see help, or refuge anywhere?
Thy land is fallen and thy lord, and thou
A prisoner and alone, one woman; how
Canst battle against us? For thine own good
I would not have thee strive, nor make ill blood
And shame about thee. . . . Ah, nor move thy lips
In silence there, to cast upon the ships
Thy curse! One word of evil to the host,
This babe shall have no burial, but be tossed
Naked. . . . Ah, peace! And bear as best thou may,
War's fortune. So thou shalt not go thy way
Leaving this child unburied; nor the Greek
Be stern against thee, if thy heart be meek!

ANDROMACHE (*to the child*).

Go, die, my best-beloved, my cherished one,
In fierce men's hands, leaving me here alone.
Thy father was too valiant; that is why
They slay thee! Other children, like to die,
Might have been spared for that. But on thy head
His good is turned to evil.

O thou bed
And bridal; O the joining of the hand,
That led me long ago to Hector's land
To bear, O not a lamb for Grecian swords
To slaughter, but a Prince o'er all the hordes
Enthroned of wide-flung Asia. . . . Weepest thou?
Nay, why, my little one? Thou canst not know.

And Father will not come; he will not come;
Not once, the great spear flashing, and the tomb
Riven to set thee free! Not one of all
His brethren, nor the might of Ilion's wall.

How shall it be? One horrible spring . . . deep, deep
Down. And thy neck . . . Ah God, so cometh sleep! . . .
And none to pity thee! . . . Thou little thing
That curlest in my arms, what sweet scents cling
All round thy neck! Belovèd; can it be
All nothing, that this bosom cradled thee
And fostered; all the weary nights, wherethrough
I watched upon thy sickness, till I grew
Wasted with watching? Kiss me. This one time;
Not ever again. Put up thine arms, and climb
About my neck: now, kiss me, lips to lips. . . .

O, ye have found an anguish that outstrips
All tortures of the East, ye gentle Greeks!
Why will ye slay this innocent, that seeks
No wrong? . . . O Helen, Helen, thou ill tree
That Tyndareus planted, who shall deem of thee
As child of Zeus? O, thou hast drawn thy breath
From many fathers, Madness, Hate, red Death,
And every rotting poison of the sky!
Zeus knows thee not, thou vampire, draining dry.
Greece and the world! God hate thee and destroy,
That with those beautiful eyes hast blasted Troy,
And made the far-famed plains a waste withal.

Quick! take him: drag him: cast him from the wall,
If cast ye will! Tear him, ye beasts, be swift!
God hath undone me, and I cannot lift
One hand, one hand, to save my child from death . . .
O, hide my head for shame: fling me beneath
Your galleys' benches! . . .

[*She swoons: then half-rising.*]

Quick: I must begone

To the bridal. . . . I have lost my child, my own!

[*The Soldiers close round her.*]

LEADER.

O Troy ill-starred; for one strange woman, one
Abhorred kiss, how are thine hosts undone!

TALTHYBIUS (*bending over ANDROMACHE and gradually taking the Child from her*).

Come, Child: let be that clasp of love
Outwearied! Walk thy ways with me,
Up to the crested tower, above
Thy father's wall . . . Where they decree
Thy soul shall perish.—Hold him: hold!—
Would God some other man might ply
These charges, one of duller mould,
And nearer to the iron than I!

HECUBA.

O Child, they rob us of our own,
Child of my Mighty One outworn:
Ours, ours thou art!—Can aught be done
Of deeds, can aught of pain be borne,
To aid thee?—Lo, this beaten head,
This bleeding bosom! These I spread
As gifts to thee. I can thus much.
Woe, woe for Troy, and woe for thee!
What fall yet lacketh, ere we touch
The last dead deep of misery?

[*The Child, who has started back from TALTHYBIUS, is taken up by one of the Soldiers and borne back towards the city, while ANDROMACHE is set again on the Chariot and driven off towards the ships. TALTHYBIUS goes with the Child.*]

CHORUS.

In Salamis, filled with the foaming
Of billows and murmur of bees,
Old Telamon stayed from his roaming,
Long ago, on a throne of the seas;

[*Strophe 1.*]

Looking out on the hills olive-laden,
Enchanted, where first from the earth
The grey-gleaming fruit of the Maiden
Athena had birth;
A soft grey crown for a city
Belovèd, a City of Light:
Yet he rested not there, nor had pity,
But went forth in his might,
Where Heracles wandered, the lonely
Bow-bearer, and lent him his hands
For the wrecking of one land only,
Of Ilion, Ilion only,
Most hated of lands!

[*Antistrophe 1.*]

Of the bravest of Hellas he made him
A ship-folk, in wrath for the Steeds,
And sailed the wide waters, and stayed him
At last amid Simoïs' reeds;
And the oars beat slow in the river,
And the long ropes held in the strand,
And he felt for his bow and his quiver,
The wrath of his hand.
And the old king died; and the towers
That Phœbus had builded did fall,
And his wrath, as a flame that devours,
Ran red over all;
And the fields and the woodlands lay blasted,
Long ago. Yea, twice hath the Sire
Uplifted his hand and downcast it
On the wall of the Dardan, downcast it
As a sword and as fire.

[*Strophe 2.*]

In vain, all in vain,
O thou 'mid wine-jars golden
That movest in delicate joy,
Ganymêdês, child of Troy,
The lips of the Highest drain
The cup in thine hand upholden:

And thy mother, thy mother that bore thee,
 Is wasted with fire and torn;
 And the voice of her shores is heard,
 Wild, as the voice of a bird,
 For lovers and children before thee
 Crying, and mothers outworn.
 And the pools of thy bathing are perished,
 And the wind-strewn ways of thy feet:
 Yet thy face as aforetime is cherished
 Of Zeus, and the breath of it sweet;
 Yea, the beauty of Calm is upon it
 In houses at rest and afar.
 But thy land, He hath wrecked and o'erthrown it
 In the wailing of war.

O Love, ancient Love, [*Antistrophe* 2.]
 Of old to the Dardan given;
 Love of the Lords of the Sky;
 How didst thou lift us high
 In Ilion, yea, and above
 All cities, as wed with heaven!
 For Zeus—O leave it unspoken:
 But alas for the love of the Morn;
 Morn of the milk-white wing,
 The gentle, the earth-loving,
 That shineth on battlements broken
 In Troy, and a people forlorn!
 And, lo, in her bowers Tithônus,
 Our brother, yet sleeps as of old:
 O, she too hath loved us and known us,
 And the Steeds of her star, flashing gold,
 Stooped hither and bore him above us;
 Then blessed we the Gods in our joy.
 But all that made them to love us
 Hath perished from Troy.

[As the song ceases, the King MENELAUS enters, richly
 armed and followed by a bodyguard of Soldiers. He
 is a prey to violent and conflicting emotions.]

MENELAUS.

How bright the face of heaven, and how sweet
The air this day, that layeth at my feet
The woman that I . . . Nay: 'twas not for her
I came. 'Twas for the man, the cozener
And thief, that ate with me and stole away
My bride. But Paris lieth, this long day,
By God's grace, under the horse-hoofs of the Greek,
And round him all his land. And now I seek . . .
Curse her! I scarce can speak the name she bears,
That was my wife. Here with the prisoners
They keep her, in these huts, among the hordes
Of numbered slaves.—The host whose labouring swords
Won her, have given her up to me, to fill
My pleasure; perchance kill her, or not kill,
But lead her home.—Methinks I have foregone
The slaying of Helen here in Ilion . . .
Over the long seas I will bear her back,
And there, there, cast her out to whatso wrack
Of angry death they may devise, who know
Their dearest dead for her in Ilion.—Ho!
Ye soldiers! Up into the chambers where
She croucheth! Grip the long blood-reeking hair,
And drag her to mine eyes . . . [*Controlling himself.*]

And when there come
Fair breezes, my long ships shall bear her home.

[*The Soldiers go to force open the door of the second
hut on the left.*]

HECUBA.

Thou deep Base of the World, and thou high Throne
Above the World, whoe'er thou art, unknown
And hard of surmise, Chain of Things that be,
Or Reason of our Reason; God, to thee
I lift my praise, seeing the silent road
That bringeth justice ere the end be trod
To all that breathes and dies.

MENELAUS (*turning*).

Ha! who is there
That prayeth heaven, and in so strange a prayer?

HECUBA.

I bless thee, Menelaus, I bless thee,
If thou wilt slay her! Only fear to see
Her visage, lest she snare thee and thou fall!
She snareth strong men's eyes; she snareth tall
Cities; and fire from out her eateth up
Houses. Such magic hath she, as a cup
Of death! . . . Do I not know her? Yea, and thou,
And these that lie around, do they not know?

[*The Soldiers return from the hut and stand aside to let
HELEN pass between them. She comes through them,
gentle and unafraid: there is no disorder in her rai-
ment.*]

HELEN.

King Menelaus, thy first deed might make
A woman fear. Into my chamber brake
Thine armèd men, and lead me wrathfully.

Methinks, almost, I know thou hatest me.
Yet I would ask thee, what decree is gone
Forth for my life or death?

MENELAUS (*struggling with his emotion*).

There was not one
That scrupled for thee. All, with one will
Gave thee to me, whom thou hast wronged, to kill!

HELEN.

And is it granted that I speak, or no,
In answer to them ere I die, to show
I die most wronged and innocent?

MENELAUS.

I seek
To kill thee, woman; not to hear thee speak!

HECUBA.

O hear her! She must never die unheard,
King Menelaus! And give me the word
To speak in answer! All the wrong she wrought
Away from thee, in Troy, thou knowest not.
The whole tale set together is a death
Too sure; she shall not 'scape thee!

MENELAUS.

'Tis but breath

And time. For thy sake, Hecuba, if she need
To speak, I grant the prayer. I have no heed
Nor mercy—let her know it well—for her!

HELEN.

It may be that, how false or true soe'er
Thou deem me, I shall win no word from thee.
So sore thou holdest me thine enemy.
Yet I will take what words I think thy heart
Holdeth of anger: and in even part
Set my wrong and thy wrong, and all that fell.

[*Pointing to* HECUBA.]

She cometh first, who bare the seed and well
Of springing sorrow, when to life she brought
Paris: and that old King, who quenched not
Quick in the spark, ere yet he woke to slay,
The firebrand's image.—But enough: a day
Came, and this Paris judged beneath the trees
Three Crowns of Life, three diverse Goddesses.
The gift of Pallas was of War, to lead
His East in conquering battles, and make bleed
The hearths of Hellas. Hera held a Throne—
If majesties he craved—to reign alone
From Phrygia to the last realm of the West.
And Cypris, if he deemed her loveliest,
Beyond all heaven, made dreams about my face
And for her grace gave me. And, lo! her grace

Was judged the fairest, and she stood above
Those twain.—Thus was I loved, and thus my love
Hath holpen Hellas. No fierce Eastern crown
Is o'er your lands, no spear hath cast them down.
O, it was well for Hellas! But for me
Most ill; caught up and sold across the sea
For this my beauty; yea, dishonoured
For that which else had been about my head
A crown of honour. . . . Ah, I see thy thought;
The first plain deed, 'tis that I answer not,
How in the dark out of thy house I fled . . .
There came the Seed of Fire, this woman's seed;
Came—O, a Goddess great walked with him then—
This Alexander, Breaker-down-of-Men,
This Paris, Strength-is-with-him; whom thou, whom—
O false and light of heart—thou in thy room
Didst leave, and spreadest sail for Cretan seas,
Far, far from me! . . . And yet, how strange it is!
I ask not thee; I ask my own sad thought,
What was there in my heart, that I forgot
My home and land and all I loved, to fly
With a strange man? Surely it was not I,
But Cypris, there! Lay thou thy rod on her,
And be more high than Zeus and bitterer,
Who o'er all other spirits hath his throne,
But knows her chain must bind him. My wrong done
Hath its own pardon. . . .

One word yet thou hast,
Methinks, of righteous seeming. When at last
The earth for Paris oped and all was o'er,
And her strange magic bound my feet no more,
Why kept I still his house, why fled not I
To the Argive ships? . . . Ah, how I strove to fly!
The old Gate-Warden could have told thee all,
My husband, and the watchers from the wall;
It was not once they took me, with the rope;
Tied, and this body swung in the air, to grope
Its way toward thee, from that dim battlement.

Ah, husband still, how shall thy hand be bent
To slay me? Nay, if Right be come at last,
What shalt thou bring but comfort for pains past,
And harbour for a woman storm-driven:
A woman borne away by violent men:
And this one birthright of my beauty, this
That might have been my glory, lo, it is
A stamp that God hath burned, of slavery!

Alas! and if thou cravest still to be
As one set above gods, inviolate,
'Tis but a fruitless longing holds thee yet.

LEADER.

O Queen, think of thy children and thy land,
And break her spell! The sweet soft speech, the hand
And heart so fell: it maketh me afraid.

HECUBA.

Meseems her goddesses first cry mine aid
Against these lying lips! . . . Not Hera, nay,
Nor virgin Pallas deem I such low clay,
To barter their own folk, Argos and brave
Athens, to be trod down, the Phrygian's slave,
All for vain glory and a shepherd's prize
On Ida! Wherefore should great Hera's eyes
So hunger to be fair? She doth not use
To seek for other loves, being wed with Zeus.
And maiden Pallas . . . did some strange god's face
Beguile her, that she craved for loveliness,
Who chose from God one virgin gift above
All gifts, and fleeth from the lips of love?

Ah, deck not out thine own heart's evil springs
By making spirits of heaven as brutish things
And cruel. The wise may hear thee, and guess all!

And Cypris must take ship—fantastical!
Sail with my son and enter at the gate
To seek thee! Had she willed it, she had sate
At peace in heaven, and wafted thee, and all

Amyclae with thee, under Ilion's wall.

My son was passing beautiful, beyond
His peers; and thine own heart, that saw and conned
His face, became a spirit enchanting thee.
For all wild things that in mortality
Have being, are Aphroditê; and the name
She bears in heaven is born and writ of them.

Thou sawest him in gold and orient vest
Shining, and lo, a fire about thy breast
Leapt! Thou hadst fed upon such little things,
Pacing thy ways in Argos. But now wings
Were come! Once free from Sparta, and there rolled
The Ilian glory, like broad streams of gold,
To steep thine arms and splash the towers! How small,
How cold that day was Menelaus' hall!

Enough of that. It was by force my son
Took thee, thou sayst, and striving. . . . Yet not one
In Sparta knew! No cry, no sudden prayer
Rang from thy rooms that night. . . . Castor was there
To hear thee, and his brother: both true men,
Not yet among the stars! And after, when
Thou camest here to Troy, and in thy track
Argos and all its anguish and the rack
Of war—Ah God—perchance men told thee 'Now
The Greek prevails in battle': then wouldst thou
Praise Menelaus, that my son might smart,
Striving with that old image in a heart
Uncertain still. Then Troy had victories:
And this Greek was as naught! Always thine eyes
Watched Fortune's eyes, to follow hot where she
Led first. Thou wouldst not follow Honesty.

Thy secret ropes, thy body swung to fall
Far, like a desperate prisoner, from the wall!
Who found thee so? When wast thou taken? Nay,
Hadst thou no surer rope, no sudden way
Of the sword, that any woman honest-souled
Had sought long since, loving her lord of old?

Often and often did I charge thee; 'Go,
 My daughter; go thy ways. My sons will know
 New loves. I will give aid, and steal thee past
 The Argive watch. O give us peace at last,
 Us and our foes!' But out thy spirit cried
 As at a bitter word. Thou hadst thy pride
 In Alexander's house, and O, 'twas sweet
 To hold proud Easterns bowing at thy feet.
 They were great things to thee! . . . And comest thou now
 Forth, and hast decked thy bosom and thy brow,
 And breathest with thy lord the same blue air,
 Thou evil heart? Low, low, with ravaged hair,
 Rent raiment, and flesh shuddering, and within—
 O shame at last, not glory for thy sin;
 So face him if thou canst! . . . Lo, I have done.
 Be true, O King; let Hellas bear her crown
 Of Justice. Slay this woman, and upraise
 The law for evermore: she that betrays
 Her husband's bed, let her be judged and die.

LEADER.

Be strong, O King; give judgment worthily
 For thee and thy great house. Shake off thy long
 Reproach; not weak, but iron against the wrong!

MENE LAUS.

Thy thought doth walk with mine in one intent.
 'Tis sure; her heart was willing, when she went
 Forth to a stranger's bed. And all her fair
 Tale of enchantment, 'tis a thing of air! . . .

[*Turning furiously upon HELEN.*]

Out, woman! There be those that seek thee yet
 With stones! Go, meet them. So shall thy long debt
 Be paid at last. And ere this night is o'er
 Thy dead face shall dishonour me no more!

HELEN (*kneeling before him and embracing him*).

Behold, mine arms are wreathed about thy knees;

Lay not upon my head the phantasies
Of Heaven. Remember all, and slay me not!

HECUBA.

Remember them she murdered, them that fought
Beside thee, and their children! Hear that prayer!

MENELAUS.

Peace, agèd woman, peace! 'Tis not for her;
She is as naught to me.

(To the Soldiers.)

. . . March on before,
Ye ministers, and tend her to the shore . . .
And have some chambered galley set for her,
Where she may sail the seas.

HECUBA.

If thou be there,
I charge thee, let not her set foot therein!

MENELAUS.

How? Shall the ship go heavier for her sin?

HECUBA.

A lover once, will always love again.

MENELAUS.

If that he loved be evil, he will fain
Hate it! . . . Howbeit, thy pleasure shall be done.
Some other ship shall bear her, not mine own . . .
Thou counsellest very well . . . And when we come
To Argos, then . . . O then some pitiless doom
Well-earned, black as her heart! One that shall bind
Once for all time the law on womankind
Of faithfulness! . . . 'Twill be no easy thing,
God knoweth. But the thought thereof shall fling
A chill on the dreams of women, though they be
Wilder of wing and loathèd more than she!

[Exit, following HELEN, who is escorted by the Soldiers.]

CHORUS.

Some Women.[*Strophe 1.*]

And hast thou turned from the Altar of frankincense,
And given to the Greek thy temple of Ilion?
The flame of the cakes of corn, is it gone from hence,
The myrrh on the air and the wreathèd towers gone?
And Ida, dark Ida, where the wild ivy grows,
The glens that run as rivers from the summer-broken snows,
And the Rock, is it forgotten, where the first sunbeam glows,
The lit house most holy of the Dawn?

Others.[*Antistrophe 1.*]

The sacrifice is gone and the sound of joy,
The dancing under the stars and the night-long prayer:
The Golden Images and the Moons of Troy,
The twelve Moons and the mighty names they bear:
My heart, my heart crieth, O Lord Zeus on high,
Were they all to thee as nothing, thou thronèd in the sky,
Thronèd in the fire-cloud, where a City, near to die,
Passeth in the wind and the flare?

A Woman.[*Strophe 2.*]

Dear one, O husband mine,
Thou in the dim dominions
Driftest with waterless lips,
Unburied; and me the ships
Shall bear o'er the bitter brine,
Storm-birds upon angry pinions,
Where the towers of the Giants shine
O'er Argos cloudily,
And the riders ride by the sea.

Others.

And children still in the Gate
Crowd and cry,

A multitude desolate,
 Voices that float and wait
 As the tears run dry:

'Mother, alone on the shore
 They drive me, far from thee:
 Lo, the dip of the oar,
 The black hull on the sea!
 Is it the Isle Immortal,
 Salamis, waits for me?
 Is it the Rock that broods
 Over the sundered floods
 Of Corinth, the ancient portal
 Of Pelops' sovranty?'

A Woman.

[*Antistrophe 2.*]

Out in the waste of foam,
 Where rideth dark Menelaus,
 Come to us there, O white
 And jagged, with wild sea-light
 And crashing of oar-blades, come,
 O thunder of God, and slay us:
 While our tears are wet for home,
 While out in the storm go we,
 Slaves of our enemy!

Others.

And, God, may Helen be there,
 With mirror of gold,
 Decking her face so fair,
 Girl-like; and hear, and stare,
 And turn death-cold:
 Never, ah, never more
 The hearth of her home to see,
 Nor sand of the Spartan shore,
 Nor tombs where her fathers be,
 Nor Athena's bronzen Dwelling,
 Nor the towers of Pitane;

For her face was a dark desire
Upon Greece, and shame like fire,
And her dead are welling, welling,
From red Simoïs to the sea!

[TALTHYBIUS, followed by one or two Soldiers
and bearing the child ASTYANAX dead, is
seen approaching.]

LEADER.

Ah, change on change! Yet each one racks
This land with evil manifold;
Unhappy wives of Troy, behold,
They bear the dead Astyanax,
Our prince, whom bitter Greeks this hour
Have hurled to death from Ilion's tower.

TALTHYBIUS.

One galley, Hecuba, there lingereth yet,
Lapping the wave, to gather the last freight
Of Pyrrhus' spoils for Thessaly. The chief
Himself long since hath parted, much in grief
For Pêleus' sake, his grandsire, whom, men say,
Acastus, Pelias' son, in war array
Hath driven to exile. Loath enough before
Was he to linger, and now goes the more
In haste, bearing Andromache, his prize.
'Tis she hath charmed these tears into mine eyes,
Weeping her fatherland, as o'er the wave
She gazed, and speaking words to Hector's grave.
Howbeit, she prayed us that due rites be done
For burial of this babe, thine Hector's son,
That now from Ilion's tower is fallen and dead.
And, lo! this great bronze-fronted shield, the dread
Of many a Greek, that Hector held in fray,
O never in God's name—so did she pray—
Be this borne forth to hang in Pêleus' hall
Or that dark bridal chamber, that the wall

May hurt her eyes; but here, in Troy o'erthrown,
 Instead of cedar wood and vaulted stone,
 Be this her child's last house. . . . And in thine hands
 She bade me lay him, to be swathed in bands
 Of death and garments, such as rest to thee
 In these thy fallen fortunes; seeing that she
 Hath gone her ways, and, for her master's haste,
 May no more fold the babe unto his rest.

Howbeit, so soon as he is garlanded
 And robed, we will heap earth above his head
 And lift our sails. . . . See all be swiftly done,
 As thou art bidden. I have saved thee one
 Labour. For as I passed Scamander's stream
 Hard by, I let the waters run on him,
 And cleansed his wounds.—See, I will go forth now
 And break the hard earth for his grave: so thou
 And I will haste together, to set free
 Our oars at last to beat the homeward sea!

*[He goes out with his Soldiers, leaving the body of the
 Child in HECUBA's arms.]*

HECUBA.

Set the great orb of Hector's shield to lie
 Here on the ground. 'Tis bitter that mine eye
 Should see it. . . . O ye Argives, was your spear
 Keen, and your hearts so low and cold, to fear
 This babe? 'Twas a strange murder for brave men!
 For fear this babe some day might raise again
 His fallen land! Had ye so little pride?
 While Hector fought, and thousands at his side,
 Ye smote us, and we perished; and now, now,
 When all are dead and Ilion lieth low,
 Ye dread this innocent! I deem it not
 Wisdom, that rage of fear that hath no thought. . . .

Ah, what a death hath found thee, little one!
 Hadst thou but fallen fighting, hadst thou known
 Strong youth and love and all the majesty
 Of godlike kings, then had we spoken of thee

As of one blessèd . . . could in any wise
These days know blessedness. But now thine eyes
Have seen, thy lips have tasted, but thy soul
No knowledge had nor usage of the whole
Rich life that lapt thee round. . . . Poor little child!
Was it our ancient wall, the circuit piled
By loving Gods, so savagely hath rent
Thy curls, these little flowers innocent
That were thy mother's garden, where she laid
Her kisses; here, just where the bone-edge frayed
Grins white above—Ah heaven, I will not see!

Ye tender arms, the same dear mould have ye
As his; how from the shoulder loose ye drop
And weak! And dear proud lips, so full of hope
And closed for ever! What false words ye said
At daybreak, when ye crept into my bed,
Called me kind names, and promised: 'Grandmother,
When thou art dead, I will cut close my hair.
And lead out all the captains to ride by
Thy tomb.' Why didst thou cheat me so? 'Tis I,
Old, homeless, childless, that for thee must shed
Cold tears, so young, so miserably dead.

Dear God, the pattering welcomes of thy feet,
The nursing in my lap; and O, the sweet
Falling asleep together! All is gone.
How should a poet carve the funeral stone
To tell thy story true? 'There lieth here
A babe whom the Greeks feared, and in their fear
Slew him.' Aye, Greece will bless the tale it tells!

Child, they have left thee beggared of all else
In Hector's house; but one thing shalt thou keep,
This war-shield bronzen-barred, wherein to sleep.
Alas, thou guardian true of Hector's fair
Left arm, how art thou masterless! And there
I see his handgrip printed on thy hold;
And deep stains of the precious sweat, that rolled
In battle from the brows and beard of him,
Drop after drop, are writ about thy rim.

Go, bring them—such poor garments hazardous
 As these days leave. God hath not granted us
 Wherewith to make much pride. But all I can,
 I give thee, Child of Troy.—O vain is man,
 Who glorieth in his joy and hath no fears:
 While to and fro the chances of the years
 Dance like an idiot in the wind! And none
 By any strength hath his own fortune won.

*[During these lines several Women are seen approaching
 with garlands and raiment in their hands.]*

LEADER.

Lo these, who bear thee raiment harvested
 From Ilion's slain, to fold upon the dead.

*[During the following scene HECUBA gradually takes the
 garments and wraps them about the Child.]*

HECUBA.

O not in pride for speeding of the car
 Beyond thy peers, not for the shaft of war
 True aimed, as Phrygians use; not any prize
 Of joy for thee, nor splendour in men's eyes,
 Thy father's mother lays these offerings
 About thee, from the many fragrant things
 That were all thine of old. But now no more.
 One woman, loathed of God, hath broke the door
 And robbed thy treasure-house, and thy warm breath
 Made cold, and trod thy people down to death!

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Deep in the heart of me
 I feel thine hand,
 Mother: and is it he
 Dead here, our prince to be,
 And lord of the land?

HECUBA.

Glory of Phrygian raiment, which my thought
Kept for thy bridal day with some far-sought
Queen of the East, folds thee for evermore.

And thou, grey Mother, Mother-Shield that bore
A thousand days of glory, thy last crown
Is here. . . . Dear Hector's shield! Thou shalt lie down
Undying with the dead, and lordlier there
Than all the gold Odysseus' breast can bear,
The evil and the strong!

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Child of the Shield-bearer,
Alas, Hector's child!
Great Earth, the All-mother,
Taketht thee unto her
With wailing wild!

Others.

Mother of misery,
Give Death his song!

(HEC. Woe!) Aye and bitterly

(HEC. Woe!) We too weep for thee,

And the infinite wrong!

[*During these lines HECUBA, kneeling by the body, has been performing a funeral rite, symbolically staunching the dead Child's wounds.*]

HECUBA.

I make thee whole;
I bind thy wounds, O little vanished soul.
This wound and this I heal with linen white:
O emptiness of aid! . . . Yet let the rite
Be spoken. This and . . . Nay, not I, but he,
Thy father far away shall comfort thee!

[*She bows her head to the ground and remains motionless and unseeing.*]

CHORUS.

Beat, beat thine head:
 Beat with the wailing chime
 Of hands lifted in time:
 Beat and bleed for the dead.
 Woe is me for the dead!

HECUBA.

O Women! Ye, mine own . . .

[*She rises bewildered, as though she had seen a vision.*]

LEADER.

Hecuba, speak!

Thine are we all. Oh, ere thy bosom break . . .

HECUBA.

Lo, I have seen the open hand of God;
 And in it nothing, nothing, save the rod
 Of mine affliction, and the eternal hate,
 Beyond all lands, chosen and lifted great
 For Troy! Vain, vain were prayer and incense-swell
 And bulls' blood on the altars! . . . All is well.
 Had He not turned us in His hand, and thrust
 Our high things low and shook our hills as dust,
 We had not been this splendour, and our wrong
 An everlasting music for the song
 Of earth and heaven!

Go, women: lay our dead
 In his low sepulchre. He hath his meed
 Of robing. And, methinks, but little care
 Toucheth the tomb, if they that moulder there
 Have rich encerement. 'Tis we, 'tis we,
 That dream, we living and our vanity!

[*The Women bear out the dead Child upon the shield,
 singing, when presently flames of fire and dim forms
 are seen among the ruins of the City.*]

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Woe for the mother that bare thee, child,
Thread so frail of a hope so high,
That Time hath broken: and all men smiled
About thy cradle, and, passing by,
Spoke of thy father's majesty.
Low, low, thou liest!

Others.

Ha! Who be these on the crested rock?
Fiery hands in the dusk, and a shock
Of torches flung! What lingereth still,
O wounded City, of unknown ill,
Ere yet thou diest?

TALTHYBIUS (*coming out through the ruined Wall*).

Ye Captains that have charge to wreck this keep
Of Priam's City, let your torches sleep
No more! Up, fling the fire into her heart!
Then have we done with Ilion, and may part
In joy to Hellas from this evil land.

And ye—so hath one word two faces—stand,
Daughters of Troy, till on your ruined wall
The echo of my master's trumpet call
In signal breaks: then, forward to the sea,
Where the long ships lie waiting.

And for thee,
O ancient woman most unfortunate,
Follow: Odysseus' men be here, and wait
To guide thee; . . . 'Tis to him thou go'st for thrall.

HECUBA.

Ah, me! and is it come, the end of all,
The very crest and summit of my days?
I go forth from my land, and all its ways
Are filled with fire! Bear me, O aged feet,
A little nearer: I must gaze, and greet

My poor town ere she fall.

Farewell, farewell!

O thou whose breath was mighty on the swell
Of orient winds, my Troy! Even thy name
Shall soon be taken from thee. Lo, the flame
Hath thee, and we, thy children, pass away
To slavery . . . God! O God of mercy! . . . Nay:
Why call I on the Gods? They know, they know,
My prayers, and would not hear them long ago.

Quick, to the flames! O, in thine agony,
My Troy, mine own, take me to die with thee!

*[She springs toward the flames, but is seized and held by
the Soldiers.]*

TALTHYBIUS.

Back! Thou art drunken with thy miseries,
Poor woman!—Hold her fast, men, till it please
Odysseus that she come. She was his lot
Chosen from all and portioned. Lose her not!

*[He goes to watch over the burning of the City. The
dusk deepens.]*

CHORUS.

Divers Women.

Woe, woe, woe!

Thou of the Ages, O wherefore fleëst thou,
Lord of the Phrygian, Father that made us?
'Tis we, thy children; shall no man aid us?
'Tis we, thy children! Seëst thou, seëst thou?

Others.

He seëth, only his heart is pitiless;
And the land dies: yea, she,
She of the Mighty Cities perisheth citiless!
Troy shall no more be!

Others.

Woe, woe, woe!
 Ilion shineth afar!
 Fire in the deeps thereof,
 Fire in the heights above,
 And crested walls of War!

Others.

As smoke on the wing of heaven
 Climbeth and scattereth,
 Torn of the spear and driven,
 The land crieth for death:
 O stormy battlements that red fire hath riven,
 And the sword's angry breath!
*[A new thought comes to HECUBA; she kneels and beats
 the earth with her hands.]*

HECUBA.

[Strophe.]

O Earth, Earth of my children; hearken and O mine own,
 Ye have hearts and forget not, ye in the darkness lying!

LEADER.

Now hast thou found thy prayer, crying to them that are
 gone.

HECUBA.

Surely my knees are weary, but I kneel above your head;
 Hearken, O ye so silent! My hands beat your bed!

LEADER.

I, I am near thee;
 I kneel to thy dead to hear thee,
 Kneel to mine own in the darkness; O husband, hear my
 crying!

HECUBA.

Even as the beasts they drive, even as the loads they bear,

LEADER.

(Pain; O pain!)

HECUBA.

We go to the house of bondage. Hear, ye dead, O hear!

LEADER.

(Go, and come not again!)

HECUBA.

Priam, mine own Priam,
 Lying so lowly,
 Thou in thy nothingness,
 Shelterless, comfortless,
 See'st thou the thing I am?
 Know'st thou my bitter stress?

LEADER.

Nay, thou art naught to him!
 Out of the strife there came,
 Out of the noise and shame,
 Making his eyelids dim,
 Death, the Most Holy!
[The fire and smoke rise constantly higher.]

HECUBA.

[*Antistrophe.*]

O high houses of Gods, belovèd streets of my birth,
 Ye have found the way of the sword, the fiery and blood-
 red river!

LEADER.

Fall, and men shall forget you! Ye shall lie in the gentle
 earth.

HECUBA.

The dust as smoke riseth; it spreadeth wide its wing;
 It maketh me as a shadow, and my City a vanished thing!

LEADER.

Out on the smoke she goeth,
 And her name no man knoweth;

And the cloud is northward, southward; Troy is gone for ever!
[*A great crash is heard, and the Wall is lost in smoke
and darkness.*]

HECUBA.

Ha! Marked ye? Heard ye? The crash of the towers that
fall!

LEADER.

All is gone!

HECUBA.

Wrath in the earth and quaking and a flood that sweepeth all,

LEADER.

And passeth on!

[*The Greek trumpet sounds.*]

HECUBA.

Farewell!—O spirit grey,
Whatso is coming,
Fail not from under me.
Weak limbs, why tremble ye?
Forth where the new long day
Dawneth to slavery!

CHORUS.

Farewell from parting lips,
Farewell!—Come, I and thou,
Whatso may wait us now,
Forth to the long Greek ships
And the sea's foaming.

[*The trumpet sounds again, and the Women
go out in the darkness.*]

PHÆDRA

(PHÈDRE)

(1677)

BY

JEAN RACINE

Translated by Robert Bruce Boswell

CHARACTERS

THESEUS, *Son of Ægeus and King of Athens.*

PHÆDRA, *wife of Theseus and daughter of Minos and Pasiphaë.*

HIPPOLYTUS, *son of Theseus and Antiope, Queen of the Amazons.*

ARICIA, *Princess of the Blood Royal of Athens.*

ŒNONE, *nurse of Phædra.*

THERAMENES, *tutor of Hippolytus.*

ISMENE, *bosom friend of Aricia.*

PANOPE, *waiting-woman of Phædra.*

Guards.

The scene is laid at Træzen, a town of the Peloponnesus.

PHÆDRA

ACT I

[Enter HIPPOLYTUS, THERAMENES.]

HIPPOLYTUS. My mind is settled, dear Theramenes.
And I can stay not more in lovely Træzen.
In doubt that racks my soul with mortal anguish,
I grow ashamed of such long idleness.
Six months and more my father has been gone,
And what may have befallen one so dear
I know not, nor what corner of the earth
Hides him.

THERAMENES. And where, prince, will you look for him?
Already, to content your just alarm,
Have I not cross'd the seas on either side
Of Corinth, ask'd if aught were known of Theseus
Where Acheron is lost among the Shades,
Visited Elis, doubled Tœnarus,
And sail'd into the sea that saw the fall
Of Icarus? Inspired with what new hope,
Under what favor'd skies think you to trace
His footsteps? Who knows if the king, your father,
Wishes the secret of his absence known?
Perchance, while we are trembling for his life,
The hero calmly plots some fresh intrigue,
And only waits till the deluded fair—

HIPPOLYTUS. Cease, dear Theramenes, respect the name
Of Theseus. Youthful errors have been left
Behind, and no unworthy obstacle
Detains him. Phædra long has fix'd a heart
Inconstant once, nor need she fear a rival.
In seeking him I shall but do my duty,
And leave a place I dare no longer see.

THERAMENES. Indeed! When, prince, did you begin to dread

These peaceful haunts, so dear to happy childhood
Where I have seen you oft prefer to stay,
Rather than meet the tumult and the pomp
Of Athens and the court? What danger shun you,
Or shall I say what grief?

HIPPOLYTUS. That happy time
Is gone, and all is changed, since to these shores
The gods sent Phædra.

THERAMENES. I perceive the cause
Of your distress. It is the queen whose sight
Offends you. With a step-dame's spite she schemed
Your exile soon as she set eyes on you.
But if her hatred is not wholly vanish'd,
It has at least taken a milder aspect.
Besides, what danger can a dying woman,
One too who longs for death, bring on your head?
Can Phædra, sick'ning of a dire disease
Of which she will not speak, weary of life
And of herself, form any plots against you?

HIPPOLYTUS. It is not her vain enmity I fear;
Another foe alarms Hippolytus.
I fly, it must be own'd from young Aricia,
The sole survivor of an impious race.

THERAMENES. What! You become her persecutor too!
The gentle sister of the cruel sons
Of Pallas shared not in their perfidy;
Why should you hate such charming innocence?

HIPPOLYTUS. I should not need to fly, if it were hatred.

THERAMENES. May I, then, learn the meaning of your flight?

Is this the proud Hippolytus I see,
Than whom there breathed no fiercer foe to love
And to that yoke which Theseus has so oft
Endured? And can it be that Venus, scorn'd
So long, will justify your sire at last?
Has she, then, setting you with other mortals,

Forced e'en Hippolytus to offer incense
Before her? Can you love?

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, ask me not.
You, who have known my heart from infancy
And all its feelings of disdainful pride,
Spare me the shame of disavowing all
That I profess'd. Born of an Amazon,
The wildness that you wonder at I suck'd
With mother's milk. When come to riper age,
Reason approved what Nature had implanted.
Sincerely bound to me by zealous service,
You told me then the story of my sire,
And know how oft, attentive to your voice,
I kindled when I heard his noble acts,
As you described him bringing consolation
To mortals for the absence of Alcides,
The highways clear'd of monsters and of robbers,
Procrustes, Cercyon, Sciro, Sinnis slain,
The Epidaurian giant's bones dispersed,
Crete reeking with the blood of Minotaur.
But when you told me of less glorious deeds,
Troth plighted here and there and everywhere,
Young Helen stolen from her home at Sparta,
And Peribœa's tears in Salamis,
With many another trusting heart deceived
Whose very names have 'scaped his memory,
Forsaken Ariadne to the rocks
Complaining, last this Phædra, bound to him
By better ties,—you know with what regret
I heard and urged you to cut short the tale,
Happy had I been able to erase
From my remembrance that unworthy part
Of such a splendid record. I, in turn,
Am I too made the slave of love, and brought
To stoop so low? The more contemptible
That no renown is mine such as exalts
The name of Theseus, that no monsters quell'd
Have given me a right to share his weakness.

And if my pride of heart must needs be humbled,
Aricia should have been the last to tame it.
Was I beside myself to have forgotten
Eternal barriers of separation
Between us? By my father's stern command
Her brethren's blood must ne'er be reinforced
By sons of hers; he dreads a single shoot
From stock so guilty, and would fain, with her
Bury their name, that, even to the tomb
Content to be his ward, for her no torch
Of Hymen may be lit. Shall I espouse
Her rights against my sire, rashly provoke
His wrath, and launch upon a mad career—

THERAMENES. The gods, dear prince, if once your hour is
come,

Care little for the reasons that should guide us.
Wishing to shut your eyes, Theseus unseals them;
His hatred, stirring a rebellious flame
Within you, lends his enemy new charms.
And, after all, why should a guiltless passion
Alarm you? Dare you not essay its sweetness,
But follow rather a fastidious scruple?
Fear you to stray where Hercules has wander'd?
What heart so stout that Venus has not vanquish'd?
Where would you be yourself, so long her foe,
Had your own mother, constant in her scorn
Of love, ne'er glowed with tenderness for Theseus?
What boots it to affect a pride you feel not?
Confess it, all is changed; for some time past
You have been seldom seen with wild delight
Urging the rapid car along the strand,
Or, skillful in the art that Neptune taught,
Making th' unbroken steed obey the bit;
Less often have the woods return'd our shouts;
A secret burden on your spirits cast
Has dimm'd your eye. How can I doubt you love?
Vainly would you conceal the fatal wound.
Has not the fair Aricia touch'd your heart?

HIPPOLYTUS. Theramenes, I go to find my father.

THERAMENES. Will you not see the queen before you start,
My prince?

HIPPOLYTUS. That is my purpose: you can tell her.
Yes, I will see her; duty bids me do it.
But what new ill vexes her dear CENONE?

[Enter CENONE.]

CENONE. Alas, my lord, what grief was e'er like mine?
The queen has almost touch'd the gates of death.
Vainly close watch I keep by day and night,
E'en in my arms a secret malady
Slays her, and all her senses are disorder'd.
Weary yet restless from her couch she rises,
Pants for the outer air, but bids me see
That no one on her misery intrudes.
She comes.

HIPPOLYTUS. Enough. She shall not be disturb'd,
Nor be confronted with a face she hates.

[Excunt HIPPOLYTUS and THERAMENES.]

[Enter PHÆDRA.]

PHÆDRA. We have gone far enough. Stay, dear CENONE;
Strength fails me, and I needs must rest awhile.
My eyes are dazzled with this glaring light
So long unseen, my trembling knees refuse
Support. Ah me!

CENONE. Would Heaven that our tears
Might bring relief!

PHÆDRA. Ah, how these cumbrous gauds,
These veils oppress me! What officious hand
Has tied these knots, and gather'd o'er my brow
These clustering coils? How all conspires to add
To my distress!

CENONE. What is one moment wish'd,
The next, is irksome. Did you not just now,
Sick of inaction, bid us deck you out,
And, with your former energy recall'd,

Desire to go abroad, and see the light
Of day once more? You see it, and would fain
Be hidden from the sunshine that you sought.

PHÆDRA. Thou glorious author of a hapless race,
Whose daughter 'twas my mother's boast to be,
Who well may'st blush to see me in such plight,
For the last time I come to look on thee,
O Sun!

CENONE. What! Still are you in love with death?
Shall I ne'er see you, reconciled to life,
Forego these cruel accents of despair?

PHÆDRA. Would I were seated in the forest's shade!
When may I follow with delighted eye,
'Thro' glorious dust flying in full career,
A chariot—

CENONE. Madam?

PHÆDRA. Have I lost my senses?
What said I? and where am I? Whither stray
Vain wishes? Ah! The gods have made me mad.
I blush, CEnone, and confusion covers
My face, for I have let you see too clearly
The shame and grief that, in my own despite,
O'erflow these eyes of mine.

CENONE. If you must blush,
Blush at a silence that inflames your woes.
Resisting all my care, deaf to my voice,
Will you have no compassion on yourself,
But let your life be ended in mid course?
What evil spell has drain'd its fountain dry?
Thrice have the shades of night obscured the heav'ns
Since sleep has enter'd thro' your eyes, and thrice
The dawn has chased the darkness thence, since food
Pass'd your wan lips, and you are faint and languid.
To what dread purpose is your heart inclined?
How dare you make attempts upon your life,
And so offend the gods who gave it you,
Prove false to Theseus and your marriage vows,
Ay, and betray your most unhappy children,

Bending their necks yourself beneath the yoke?
That day, be sure, which robs them of their mother,
Will give high hopes back to the stranger's son,
To that proud enemy of you and yours,
To whom an Amazon gave birth, I mean
Hippolytus—

PHÆDRA. Ye gods!

CENONE. Ah, this reproach
Moves you!

PHÆDRA. Unhappy woman, to what name
Gave your mouth utterance?

CENONE. Your wrath is just.
'Tis well that that ill-omen'd name can rouse
Such rage. Then live. Let love and duty urge
Their claims. Live, suffer not this son of Scythia,
Crushing your children 'neath his odious sway,
To rule the noble offspring of the gods,
The purest blood of Greece. Make no delay;
Each moment threatens death; quickly restore
Your shatter'd strength, while yet the torch of life
Holds out, and can be fann'd into a flame.

PHÆDRA. Too long have I endured its guilt and shame!

CENONE. Why? What remorse gnaws at your heart?
Can have disturb'd you thus? Your hands are not
Polluted with the blood of innocence?

What crime

PHÆDRA. Thanks be to Heav'n, my hands are free from
stain.

Would that my soul were innocent as they!

CENONE. What awful project have you then conceived,
Whereat your conscience should be still alarm'd?

PHÆDRA. Have I not said enough? Spare me the rest.
I die to save myself a full confession.

CENONE. Die then, and keep a silence so inhuman;
But seek some other hand to close your eyes.
Tho' but a spark of life remains within you,
My soul shall go before you to the Shades.

A thousand roads are always open thither;
Pain'd at your want of confidence, I'll choose
The shortest. Cruel one, when has my faith
Deceived you? Think how in my arms you lay
New born. For you, my country and my children
I have forsaken. Do you thus repay
My faithful service?

PHÆDRA. What do you expect
From words so bitter? Were I to break silence,
Horror would freeze your blood.

CENONE. What can you say
To horrify me more than to behold
You die before my eyes?

PHÆDRA. When you shall know
My crime, my death will follow none the less,
But with the added stain of guilt.

CENONE. Dear madam,
By all the tears that I have shed for you,
By these weak knees I clasp, relieve my mind
From torturing doubt.

PHÆDRA. It is your wish. Then rise.

CENONE. I hear you. Speak.

PHÆDRA. Heav'ns! How shall I begin?

CENONE. Dismiss vain fears, you wound me with distrust.

PHÆDRA. O fatal animosity of Venus!
Into what wild distractions did she cast
My mother!

CENONE. Be they blotted from remembrance,
And for all time to come buried in silence.

PHÆDRA. My sister Ariadne, by what love
Were you betray'd to death, on lonely shores
Forsaken!

CENONE. Madam, what deep-seated pain
Prompts these reproaches against all your kin?

PHÆDRA. It is the will of Venus, and I perish,
Last, most unhappy of a family
Where all were wretched.

ÆNONE. Do you love?

PHÆDRA. I feel

All its mad fever.

ÆNONE. Ah, For whom?

PHÆDRA. Hear now

The crowning horror. Yes, I love—my lips
Tremble to say his name.

ÆNONE. Whom?

PHÆDRA. Know you him,

Son of the Amazon, whom I've oppress'd
So long?

ÆNONE. Hippolytus? Great gods!

PHÆDRA. 'Tis you

Have named him.

ÆNONE. All my blood within my veins
Seems frozen. O despair! O cursèd race!
Ill-omen'd journey! Land of misery!
Why did we ever reach thy dangerous shores?

PHÆDRA. My wound is not so recent. Scarcely had I
Been bound to Theseus by the marriage yoke,
And happiness and peace seem'd well secured,
When Athens show'd me my proud enemy.
I look'd, alternately turn'd pale and blush'd
To see him, and my soul grew all distraught;
A mist obscured my vision, and my voice
Falter'd, my blood ran cold, then burn'd like fire;
Venus I felt in all my fever'd frame,
Whose fury had so many of my race
Pursued. With fervent vows I sought to shun
Her torments, built and deck'd for her a shrine,
And there, 'mid countless victims did I seek
The reason I had lost; but all for naught,
No remedy could cure the wounds of love!
In vain I offer'd incense on her altars;
When I invoked her name my heart adored
Hippolytus, before me constantly;
And when I made her altars smoke with victims,

'Twas for a god whose name I dared not utter.
I fled his presence everywhere, but found him—
O crowning horror!—in his father's features.
Against myself, at last, I raised revolt,
And stirr'd my courage up to persecute
The enemy I loved. To banish him
I wore a step-dame's harsh and jealous carriage,
With ceaseless cries I clamor'd for his exile,
Till I had torn him from his father's arms.
I breathed once more, *Ænone*; in his absence
My days flow'd on less troubled than before,
And innocent. Submissive to my husband,
I hid my grief, and of our fatal marriage
Cherish'd the fruits. Vain caution! Cruel Fate!
Brought hither by my spouse himself, I saw
Again the enemy whom I had banish'd,
And the old wound too quickly bled afresh.
No longer is it love hid in my heart,
But Venus in her might seizing her prey.
I have conceived just terror for my crime;
I hate my life, and hold my love in horror.
Dying I wish'd to keep my fame unsullied,
And bury in the grave a guilty passion;
But I have been unable to withstand
Tears and entreaties, I have told you all;
Content, if only, as my end draws near,
You do not vex me with unjust reproaches,
Nor with vain efforts seek to snatch from death
The last faint lingering sparks of vital breath.

[*Enter PANOPE.*]

PANOPE. Fain would I hide from you tidings so sad,
But 'tis my duty, madam, to reveal them.
The hand of death has seized your peerless husband,
And you are last to hear of this disaster.

ÆNONE. What say you, Panope?

PANOPE. The queen, deceived

By a vain trust in Heav'n, begs safe return
For Theseus, while Hippolytus his son
Learns of his death from vessels that are now
In port.

PHÆDRA. Ye gods!

PANOPE. Divided counsels sway
The choice of Athens; some would have the prince,
Your child, for master; others, disregarding
The laws, dare to support the stranger's son.
'Tis even said that a presumptuous faction
Would crown Aricia and the house of Pallas.
I deem'd it right to warn you of this danger.
Hippolytus already is prepared
To start, and should he show himself at Athens,
'Tis to be fear'd the fickle crowd will all
Follow his lead.

CENONE. Enough. The queen, who hears you,
By no means will neglect this timely warning.

[Exit PANOPE.]

Dear lady, I had almost ceased to urge
The wish that you should live, thinking to follow
My mistress to the tomb, from which my voice
Had fail'd to turn you; but this new misfortune
Alters the aspect of affairs, and prompts
Fresh measures. Madam, Theseus is no more,
You must supply his place. He leaves a son,
A slave, if you should die, but, if you live,
A king. On whom has he to lean but you?
No hand but yours will dry his tears. Then live
For him, or else the tears of innocence
Will move the gods, his ancestors, to wrath
Against his mother. Live, your guilt is gone,
No blame attaches to your passion now.
The king's decease has freed you from the bonds
That made the crime and horror of your love.
Hippolytus no longer need be dreaded,
Him you may see henceforth without reproach.
It may be, that, convinced of your aversion,

He means to head the rebels. Undeceive him,
Soften his callous heart, and bend his pride.
King of this fertile land, in Trœzen here
His portion lies; but as he knows, the laws
Give to your son the ramparts that Minerva
Built and protects. A common enemy
Threatens you both, unite then to oppose
Aricia.

PHÆDRA. To your counsel I consent.
Yes, I will live, if life can be restored,
If my affection for a son has pow'r
To rouse my sinking heart at such a dangerous hour.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

[*Enter ARICIA and ISMENE.*]

ARICIA. Hippolytus request to see me here!
Hippolytus desire to bid farewell!
Is't true, Ismene? Are you not deceived?

ISMENE. This is the first result of Theseus' death.
Prepare yourself to see from every side
Hearts turn toward you that were kept away
By Theseus. Mistress of her lot at last,
Aricia soon shall find all Greece fall low,
To do her homage.

ARICIA. 'Tis not then, Ismene,
An idle tale? Am I no more a slave?
Have I no enemies?

ISMENE. The gods oppose
Your peace no longer, and the soul of Theseus
Is with your brothers.

ARICIA. Does the voice of fame
Tell how he died?

ISMENE. Rumors incredible
Are spread. Some say that, seizing a new bride,
The faithless husband by the waves was swallow'd.

Others affirm, and this report prevails,
That with Pirithoüs to the world below
He went, and saw the shores of dark Cocytus,
Showing himself alive to the pale ghosts;
But that he could not leave those gloomy realms,
Which whoso enters there abides forever.

ARICIA. Shall I believe that ere his destined hour
A mortal may descend into the gulf
Of Hades? What attraction could o'ercome
Its terrors?

ISMENE. He is dead, and you alone
Doubt it. The men of Athens mourn his loss.
Trœzen already hails Hippolytus
As king. And Phædra, fearing for her son,
Asks counsel of the friends who share her trouble,
Here in this palace.

ARICIA. Will Hippolytus,
Think you, prove kinder than his sire, make light
My chains, and pity my misfortunes?

ISMENE. Yes,
I think so, madam.

ARICIA. Ah, you know him not
Or you would never deem so hard a heart
Can pity feel, or me alone except
From the contempt in which he holds our sex.
Has he not long avoided every spot
Where we resort?

ISMENE. I know what tales are told
Of proud Hippolytus, but I have seen
Him near you, and have watch'd with curious eye
How one esteem'd so cold would bear himself.
Little did his behavior correspond
With what I look'd for; in his face confusion
Appear'd at your first glance, he could not turn
His languid eyes away, but gazed on you.
Love is a word that may offend his pride,
But what the tongue disowns, looks can betray.

ARICIA. How eagerly my heart hears what you say,
Tho' it may be delusion, dear Ismene!
Did it seem possible to you, who know me,
That I, sad sport of a relentless Fate,
Fed upon bitter tears by night and day,
Could ever taste the maddening draught of love?
The last frail offspring of a royal race,
Children of Earth, I only have survived
War's fury. Cut off in the flow'r of youth,
Mown by the sword, six brothers have I lost;
The hope of an illustrious house, whose blood
Earth drank with sorrow, near akin to his
Whom she herself produced. Since then, you know
How thro' all Greece no heart has been allow'd
To sigh for me, lest by a sister's flame
The brothers' ashes be perchance rekindled.
You know, besides, with what disdain I view'd
My conqueror's suspicions and precautions,
And how, oppos'd as I have ever been
To love, I often thank'd the king's injustice
Which happily confirm'd my inclination.
But then I never had beheld his son.
Not that, attracted merely by the eye,
I love him for his beauty and his grace,
Endowments which he owes to Nature's bounty,
Charms which he seems to know not or to scorn.
I love and prize in him riches more rare,
The virtues of his sire, without his faults.
I love, as I must own, that generous pride
Which ne'er has stoop'd beneath the amorous yoke.
Phædra reaps little glory from a lover
So lavish of his sighs; I am too proud
To share devotion with a thousand others,
Or enter where the door is always open.
But to make one who ne'er has stoop'd before
Bend his proud neck, to pierce a heart of stone,
To bind a captive whom his chains astonish,
Who vainly 'gainst a pleasing yoke rebels,—

That piques my ardor, and I long for that.
'Twas easier to disarm the god of strength
Than this Hippolytus, for Hercules
Yielded so often to the eyes of beauty,
As to make triumph cheap. But, dear Ismene,
I take too little heed of opposition
Beyond my pow'r to quell, and you may hear me,
Humbled by sore defeat, upbraid the pride
I now admire. What! Can he love? and I
Have had the happiness to bend—

ISMENE. He comes.
Yourself shall hear him.

[*Enter HIPPOLYTUS.*]

HIPPOLYTUS. Lady, ere I go
My duty bids me tell you of your change
Of fortune. My worst fears are realized;
My sire is dead. Yes, his protracted absence
Was caused as I foreboded. Death alone,
Ending his toils, could keep him from the world
Conceal'd so long. The gods at last have doom'd
Alcides' friend, companion, and successor.
I think your hatred, tender to his virtues,
Can hear such terms of praise without resentment,
Knowing them due. One hope have I that soothes
My sorrow: I can free you from restraint.
Lo, I revoke the laws whose rigor moved
My pity; you are at your own disposal,
Both heart and hand; here, in my heritage,
In Trœzen, where my grandsire Pittheus reign'd
Of yore and I am now acknowledged king,
I leave you free, free as myself,—and more.

ARICIA. Your kindness is too great, 'tis overwhelming.
Such generosity, that pays disgrace
With honor, lends more force than you can think
To those harsh laws from which you would release me.

HIPPOLYTUS. Athens, uncertain how to fill the throne
Of Theseus, speaks of you, anon of me,

And then of Phædra's son.

ARICIA. Of me, my lord?

HIPPOLYTUS. I know myself excluded by strict law:
Greece turns to my reproach a foreign mother.
But if my brother were my only rival,
My rights prevail o'er his clearly enough
To make me careless of the law's caprice.
My forwardness is check'd by juster claims:
To you I yield my place, or, rather, own
That it is yours by right, and yours the scepter,
As handed down from Earth's great son, Erechtheus.
Adoption placed it in the hands of Ægeus:
Athens, by him protected and increased,
Welcomed a king so generous as my sire,
And left your hapless brothers in oblivion.
Now she invites you back within her walls;
Protracted strife has cost her groans enough,
Her fields are glutted with your kinsmen's blood
Fatt'ning the furrows out of which it sprung
At first. I rule this Trœzen; while the son
Of Phædra has in Crete a rich domain.
Athens is yours. I will do all I can
To join for you the votes divided now
Between us.

ARICIA. Stunn'd at all I hear, my lord,
I fear, I almost fear a dream deceives me.
Am I indeed awake? Can I believe
Such generosity? What god has put it
Into your heart? Well is the fame deserved
That you enjoy! That fame falls short of truth!
Would you for me prove traitor to yourself?
Was it not boon enough never to hate me,
So long to have abstain'd from harboring
The enmity—

HIPPOLYTUS. To hate you? I, to hate you?
However darkly my fierce pride was painted,
Do you suppose a monster gave me birth?
What savage temper, what unvenom'd hatred

Would not be mollified at sight of you?
Could I resist the soul-bewitching charm—

ARICIA. Why, what is this, sir?

HIPPOLYTUS. I have said too much
Not to say more. Prudence in vain resists
The violence of passion. I have broken
Silence at last, and I must tell you now
The secret that my heart can hold no longer.

You see before you an unhappy instance
Of hasty pride, a prince who claims compassion.
I, who, so long the enemy of Love,
Mock'd at his fetters and despised his captives,
Who, pitying poor mortals that were shipwreck'd,
In seeming safety view'd the storms from land,
Now find myself to the same fate exposed,
Toss'd to and fro upon a sea of troubles!
My boldness has been vanquish'd in a moment,
And humbled is the pride wherein I boasted.
For nearly six months past, ashamed, despairing,
Bearing where'er I go the shaft that rends
My heart, I struggle vainly to be free
From you and from myself; I shun you, present;
Absent, I find you near; I see your form
In the dark forest depths; the shades of night,
Nor less broad daylight, bring back to my view
The charms that I avoid; all things conspire
To make Hippolytus your slave. For fruit
Of all my bootless sighs, I fail to find
My former self. My bow and javelins
Please me no more, my chariot is forgotten,
With all the Sea God's lessons; and the woods
Echo my groans instead of joyous shouts
Urging my fiery steeds.

Hearing this tale
Of passion so uncouth, you blush perchance
At your own handiwork. With what wild words
I offer you my heart, strange captive held
By silken jess! But dearer in your eyes

Should be the offering, that this language comes
 Strange to my lips; reject not vows express'd
 So ill, which but for you had ne'er been form'd.

[*Enter THERAMENES.*]

THERAMENES. Prince, the queen comes. I herald her approach.

'Tis you she seeks.

HIPPOLYTUS. Me?

THERAMENES. What her thought may be
 I know not. But I speak on her behalf.

She would converse with you ere you go hence.

HIPPOLYTUS. What shall I say to her? Can she expect—

ARICIA. You cannot, noble Prince, refuse to hear her,
 Howe'er convinced she is your enemy,
 Some shade of pity to her tears is due.

HIPPOLYTUS. Shall we part thus? and will you let me go,
 Not knowing if my boldness has offended
 The goddess I adore? Whether this heart
 Left in your hands—

ARICIA. Go, Prince, pursue the schemes
 Your generous soul dictates, make Athens own
 My scepter. All the gifts you offer me
 Will I accept, but this high throne of empire
 Is not the one most precious in my sight.

[*Exeunt ARICIA and ISMENE.*]

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, is all ready?

But the Queen approaches.

Go, see the vessel in fit trim to sail.

Haste, bid the crew aboard, and hoist the signal;

Then soon return, and so deliver me

From interview most irksome.

[*Exit THERAMENE.*]

[*Enter PHÆDRA and CENONE.*]

PHÆDRA [*to CENONE*]. There I see him!

My blood forgets to flow, my tongue to speak
 What I am come to say.

CENONE. Think of your son,

How all his hopes depend on you.

PHÆDRA. I hear
You leave us, and in haste. I come to add
My tears to your distress, and for a son
Plead my alarm. No more has he a father,
And at no distant day my son must witness
My death. Already do a thousand foes
Threaten his youth. You only can defend him.
But in my secret heart remorse awakes,
And fear lest I have shut your ears against
His cries. I tremble lest your righteous anger
Visit on him ere long the hatred earn'd
By me, his mother.

HIPPOLYTUS. No such base resentment,
Madam, is mine.

PHÆDRA. I could not blame you, Prince,
If you should hate me. I have injured you:
So much you know, but could not read my heart.
T' incur your enmity has been mine aim:
The selfsame borders could not hold us both;
In public and in private I declared
Myself your foe, and found no peace till seas
Parted us from each other. I forbade
Your very name to be pronounced before me.
And yet if punishment should be proportion'd
To the offense, if only hatred draws
Your hatred, never woman merited
More pity, less deserved your enmity.

HIPPOLYTUS. A mother jealous of her children's rights
Seldom forgives the offspring of a wife
Who reign'd before her. Harassing suspicions
Are common sequels of a second marriage.
Of me would any other have been jealous
No less than you, perhaps more violent.

PHÆDRA. Ah, Prince, how Heav'n has from the general law
Made me exempt, be that same Heav'n my witness!
Far different is the trouble that devours me!

HIPPOLYTUS. This is no time for self-reproaches, madam.

It may be that your husband still beholds
The light, and Heav'n may grant him safe return,
In answer to our prayers. His guardian god
Is Neptune, ne'er by him invoked in vain.

PHÆDRA. He who has seen the mansions of the dead
Returns not thence. Since to those gloomy shores
Theseus is gone 't is vain to hope that Heav'n
May send him back. Prince, there is no release
From the Acheron's greedy maw. And yet, methinks,
He lives, and breathes in you. I see him still
Before me, and to him I seem to speak;
My heart—

Oh! I am mad; do what I will,
I cannot hide my passion.

HIPPOLYTUS. Yes, I see
The strange effects of love. Theseus, tho' dead,
Seems present to your eyes, for in your soul
There burns a constant flame.

PHÆDRA. Ah, yes, for Theseus
I languish and I long, not as the Shades
Have seen him, of a thousand different forms
The fickle lover, and of Pluto's bride
The would-be ravisher, but faithful, proud
E'en to a slight disdain, with youthful charms
Attracting every heart, as gods are painted,
Or like yourself. He had your mien, your eyes,
Spoke and could blush like you, when to the isle
Of Crete, my childhood's home, he cross'd the waves,
Worthy to win the love of Minos' daughters.
What were you doing then? Why did he gather
The flow'r of Greece, and leave Hippolytus?
Oh, why were you too young to have embark'd
On board the ship that brought thy sire to Crete?
At your hands would the monster then have perish'd,
Despite the windings of his vast retreat.
To guide your doubtful steps within the maze
My sister would have arm'd you with the clue.
But no, therein would Phædra have forestall'd her,

Love would have first inspired me with the thought;
And I it would have been whose timely aid
Had taught you all the labyrinth's crooked ways.
What anxious care a life so dear had cost me!
No thread had satisfied your lover's fears:
I would myself have wish'd to lead the way,
And share the peril you were bound to face;
Phædra with you would have explored the maze,
With you emerged in safety, or have perish'd.

HIPPOLYTUS. Gods! What is this I hear? Have you forgotten

That Theseus is my father and your husband?

PHÆDRA. Why should you fancy I have lost remembrance
Thereof, and am regardless of mine honor?

HIPPOLYTUS. Forgive me, madam. With a blush I own
That I misconstrued words of innocence.
For very shame I cannot bear your sight
Longer. I go—

PHÆDRA. Ah! cruel Prince, too well
You understood me. I have said enough
To save you from mistake. I love. But think not
That at the moment when I love you most
I do not feel my guilt; no weak compliance
Has fed the poison that infects my brain.
The ill-starr'd object of celestial vengeance,
I am not so detestable to you
As to myself. The gods will bear me witness,
Who have within my veins kindled this fire,
The gods, who take a barbarous delight
In leading a poor mortal's heart astray.
Do you yourself recall to mind the past:
'Twas not enough for me to fly, I chased you
Out of the country, wishing to appear
Inhuman, odious; to resist you better,
I sought to make you hate me. All in vain!
Hating me more I loved you none the less:
New charms were lent to you by your misfortunes.
I have been drown'd in tears, and scorch'd by fire;

Your own eyes might convince you of the truth,
 If for one moment you could look at me.
 What is't I say? Think you this vile confession
 That I have made is what I meant to utter?
 Not daring to betray a son for whom
 I trembled, 'twas to beg you not to hate him
 I came. Weak purpose of a heart too full
 Of love for you to speak of aught besides!
 Take your revenge, punish my odious passion;
 Prove yourself worthy of your valiant sire,
 And rid the world of an offensive monster!
 Does Theseus' widow dare to love his son?
 The frightful monster! Let her not escape you!
 Here is my heart. This is the place to strike.
 Already prompt to expiate its guilt,
 I feel it leap impatiently to meet
 Your arm. Strike home. Or, if it would disgrace you
 To steep your hand in such polluted blood,
 If that were punishment too mild to slake
 Your hatred, lend me then your sword, if not
 Your arm. Quick, giv't.

ÆNONE. What, madam, will you do?
 Just gods! But some one comes. Go, fly from shame,
 You cannot 'scape if seen by any thus.

[*Exeunt PHÆDRA and ÆNONE.*]

[*Enter THERAMENES.*]

THERAMENES. Is that the form of Phædra that I see
 Hurried away? What mean these signs of sorrow?
 Where is your sword? Why are you pale, confused?

HIPPOLYTUS. Friend, let us fly. I am, indeed, confounded
 With horror and astonishment extreme.
 Phædra—but no; gods, let this dreadful secret
 Remain forever buried in oblivion.

THERAMENES. The ship is ready if you wish to sail.
 But Athens has already giv'n her vote;
 Their leaders have consulted all her tribes;
 Your brother is elected, Phædra wins.

HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra?

THERAMENES. A herald, charged with a commission
From Athens, has arrived to place the reins
Of power in her hands. Her son is King.

HIPPOLYTUS. Ye gods, who know her, do ye thus reward
Her virtue?

THERAMENES. A faint rumor meanwhile whispers
That Theseus is not dead, but in Epirus
Has shown himself. But, after all my search,
I know too well—

HIPPOLYTUS. Let nothing be neglected.
This rumor must be traced back to its source.
If it be found unworthy of belief,
Let us set sail, and cost whate'er it may,
To hands deserving trust the scepter's sway.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III

[*Enter PHÆDRA and CENONE.*]

PHÆDRA. Ah! Let them take elsewhere the worthless
honors

They bring me. Why so urgent I should see them?
What flattering balm can soothe my wounded heart?
Far rather hide me: I have said too much.
My madness has burst forth like streams in flood,
And I have utter'd what should ne'er have reach'd
His ear. Gods! How he heard me! How reluctant
To catch my meaning, dull and cold as marble,
And eager only for a quick retreat!
How oft his blushes made my shame the deeper!
Why did you turn me from the death I sought?
Ah! When his sword was pointed to my bosom,
Did he grow pale, or try to snatch it from me?
That I had touch'd it was enough for him
To render it forever horrible,
Leaving defilement on the hand that holds it.

CENONE. Thus brooding on your bitter disappointment,
You only fan a fire that must be stifled.

Would it not be more worthy of the blood
Of Minos to find peace in nobler cares,
And, in defiance of a wretch who flies
From what he hates, reign, mount the proffer'd throne?

PHÆDRA. I reign! Shall I the rod of empire sway,
When reason reigns no longer o'er myself?
When I have lost control of all my senses?
When 'neath a shameful yoke I scarce can breathe?
When I am dying?

ŒNONE. Fly.

PHÆDRA. I cannot leave him.

ŒNONE. Dare you not fly from him you dared to banish?

PHÆDRA. The time for that is past. He knows my frenzy.
I have o'erstepp'd the bounds of modesty,
And blazon'd forth my shame before his eyes.
Hope stole into my heart against my will.

Did you not rally my declining pow'rs?
Was it not you yourself recall'd my soul
When fluttering on my lips, and with your counsel,
Lent me fresh life, and told me I might love him?

ŒNONE. Blame me or blame me not for your misfortunes,
Of what was I incapable, to save you?
But if your indignation e'er was roused
By insult, can you pardon his contempt?
How cruelly his eyes, severely fix'd,
Survey'd you almost prostrate at his feet!
How hateful then appear'd his savage pride!
Why did not Phædra see him then as I
Beheld him?

PHÆDRA. This proud mood that you resent
May yield to time. The rudeness of the forests
Where he was bred, inured to rigorous laws,
Clings to him still; love is a word he ne'er
Had heard before. It may be his surprise
Stunn'd him, and too much vehemence was shown
In all I said.

ŒNONE. Remember that his mother
Was a barbarian.

PHÆDRA. Scythian tho' she was,
She learned to love.

ÆNONE. He has for all the sex
Hatred intense.

PHÆDRA. Then in his heart no rival
Shall ever reign. Your counsel comes too late.

Ænone, serve my madness, not my reason.

His heart is inaccessible to love:

Let us attack him where he has more feeling.

The charms of sovereignty appear'd to touch him;

He could not hide that he was drawn to Athens;

His vessels' prows were thither turn'd already,

All sail was set to scud before the breeze.

Go you on my behalf, to his ambition

Appeal, and let the prospect of the crown

Dazzle his eyes. The sacred diadem

Shall deck his brow, no higher honor mine

Than there to bind it. His shall be the pow'r

I cannot keep; and he shall teach my son

How to rule men. It may be he will deign

To be to him a father. Son and mother

He shall control. Try ev'ry means to move him;

Your words will find more favor than can mine.

Urge him with groans and tears; show Phædra dying,

Nor blush to use the voice of supplication.

In you is my last hope; I'll sanction all

You say; and on the issue hangs my fate.

[Exit ÆNONE.]

PHÆDRA [alone]. Venus implacable, who seest me shamed

And sore confounded, have I not enough

Been humbled? How can cruelty be stretch'd

Farther? Thy shafts have all gone home, and thou

Hast triumph'd. Would'st thou win a new renown?

Attack an enemy more contumacious:

Hippolytus neglects thee, braves thy wrath,

Nor ever at thine altars bow'd the knee.

Thy name offends his proud, disdainful ears.

Our interests are alike: avenge thyself,

Force him to love—

But what is this? CENONE

Return'd already? He detests me then,

And will not hear you.

[Enter CENONE.]

CENONE. Madam, you must stifle

A fruitless love. Recall your former virtue:

The king who was thought dead will soon appear

Before your eyes, Theseus has just arrived,

Theseus is here. The people flock to see him

With eager haste. I went by your command

To find the prince, when with a thousand shouts

The air was rent—

PHÆDRA. My husband is alive,

That is enough, CENONE. I have own'd

A passion that dishonors him. He lives:

I ask to know no more.

CENONE. What?

PHÆDRA. I foretold it,

But you refused to hear. Your tears prevail'd

Over my just remorse. Dying this morn,

I had deserved compassion; your advice

I took, and die dishonor'd.

CENONE. Die?

PHÆDRA. Just Heav'ns!

What have I done to-day? My husband comes,

With him his son: and I shall see the witness

Of my adulterous flame watch with what face

I greet his father, while my heart is big

With sighs he scorn'd, and tears that could not move him

Moisten mine eyes. Think you that his respect

For Theseus will induce him to conceal

My madness, nor disgrace his sire and king?

Will he be able to keep back the horror

He has for me? His silence would be vain.

I know my treason, and I lack the boldness

Of those abandon'd women who can taste

Tranquillity in crime, and show a forehead

All unabash'd. I recognize my madness,
Recall it all. These vaulted roofs, methinks,
These walls can speak, and, ready to accuse me,
Wait but my husband's presence to reveal
My perfidy. Death only can remove
This weight of horror. Is it such misfortune
To cease to live? Death causes no alarm
To misery. I only fear the name
That I shall leave behind me. For my sons
How sad a heritage! The blood of Jove
Might justly swell the pride that boasts descent
From Heav'n, but heavy weighs a mother's guilt
Upon her offspring. Yes, I dread the scorn
That will be cast on them with too much truth,
For my disgrace. I tremble when I think
That, crush'd beneath that curse, they'll never dare
To raise their eyes.

ÆNONE. Doubt not I pity both;
Never was fear more just than yours. Why, then,
Expose them to this ignominy? Why
Will you accuse yourself? You thus destroy
The only hope that's left; it will be said
That Phædra, conscious of her perfidy,
Fled from her husband's sight. Hippolytus
Will be rejoiced that, dying, you should lend
His charge support. What can I answer him?
He'll find it easy to confute my tale,
And I shall hear him with an air of triumph
To every open ear repeat your shame.
Sooner than that may fire from heav'n consume me!
Deceive me not. Say, do you love him still?
How look you now on this contemptuous prince?

PHÆDRA. As on a monster frightful to mine eyes.

ÆNONE. Why yield him, then, an easy victory?
You fear him. Venture to accuse him first,
As guilty of the charge which he may bring
This day against you. Who can say 't is false?
All tells against him: in your hands his sword

Happily left behind, your present trouble,
 Your past distress, your warnings to his father,
 His exile which your earnest pray'rs obtain'd.

PHÆDRA. What! Would you have me slander innocence?

ŒNONE. My zeal has need of naught from you but silence.
 Like you I tremble, and am loath to do it;
 More willingly I'd face a thousand deaths.
 But since without this bitter remedy
 I lose you, and to me your life outweighs
 All else, I'll speak. Theseus, howe'er enraged,
 Will do no worse than banish him again.
 A father, when he punishes, remains
 A father, and his ire is satisfied
 With a light sentence. But if guiltless blood
 Should flow, is not your honor of more moment?
 A treasure far too precious to be risk'd?
 You must submit, whatever it dictates;
 For, when our reputation is at stake,
 All must be sacrificed, conscience itself.
 But someone comes. 'T is Theseus.

PHÆDRA. And I see
 Hippolytus, my ruin plainly written
 In his stern eyes. Do what you will; I trust
 My fate to you. I cannot help myself.

[*Enter THESEUS, HIPPOLYTUS, and THERAMENES.*]

THESEUS. Fortune no longer fights against my wishes,
 Madam, and to your arms restores—

PHÆDRA. Stay, Theseus!
 Do not profane endearments that were once
 So sweet, but which I am unworthy now
 To taste. You have been wrong'd. Fortune has proved
 Spiteful, nor in your absence spared your wife.
 I am unfit to meet your fond caress,
 How I may bear my shame my only care
 Henceforth. [*Exeunt PHÆDRA and ŒNONE.*]

THESEUS. Strange welcome for your father, this!
 What does it mean, my son?

HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra alone
Can solve this mystery. But if my wish
Can move you, let me never see her more;
Suffer Hippolytus to disappear
Forever from the home that holds your wife.

THESEUS. You, my son! Leave me?

HIPPOLYTUS. 'T was not I who sought her:
'T was you who led her footsteps to these shores.
At your departure you thought meet, my lord,
To trust Aricia and the queen to this
Trœzenian land, and I myself was charged
With their protection. But what cares henceforth
Need keep me here? My youth of idleness
Has shown its skill enough o'er paltry foes
That range the woods. May I not quit a life
Of such inglorious ease, and dip my spear
In nobler blood? Ere you had reach'd my age
More than one tyrant, monster more than one
Had felt the weight of your stout arm. Already,
Successful in attacking insolence,
You had removed all dangers that infested
Our coasts to east and west. The traveler fear'd
Outrage no longer. Hearing of your deeds,
Already Hercules relied on you,
And rested from his toils. While I, unknown
Son of so brave a sire, am far behind
Even my mother's footsteps. Let my courage
Have scope to act, and if some monster yet
Has 'scaped you, let me lay the glorious spoils
Down at your feet; or let the memory
Of death faced nobly keep my name alive,
And prove to all the world I was your son.

THESEUS. Why, what is this? What terror has possess'd
My family to make them fly before me?
If I return to find myself so fear'd,
So little welcome, why did Heav'n release me
From prison? My sole friend, misled by passion,
Was bent on robbing of his wife the tyrant

Who ruled Epirus. With regret I lent
The lover aid, but Fate had made us blind,
Myself as well as him. The tyrant seized me
Defenseless and unarm'd. Pirithoüs
I saw with tears cast forth to be devour'd
By savage beasts that lapp'd the blood of men.
Myself in gloomy caverns he enclosed,
Deep in the bowels of the earth, and nigh
To Pluto's realms. Six months I lay ere Heav'n
Had pity, and I 'scaped the watchful eyes
That guarded me. Then did I purge the world
Of a foul foe, and he himself has fed
His monsters. But when with expectant joy
To all that is most precious I draw near
Of what the gods have left me, when my soul
Looks for full satisfaction in a sight
So dear, my only welcome is a shudder,
Embrace rejected, and a hasty flight.
Inspiring, as I clearly do, such terror,
Would I were still a prisoner in Epirus!
Phædra complains that I have suffer'd outrage.
Who has betray'd me? Speak. Why was I not
Avenged? Has Greece, to whom mine arm so oft
Brought useful aid, shelter'd the criminal?
You make no answer. Is my son, mine own
Dear son, confederate with mine enemies?
I'll enter. This suspense is overwhelming.
I'll learn at once the culprit and the crime,
And Phædra must explain her troubled state. [Exit.]

HIPPOLYTUS. What do these words portend, which seem'd
to freeze

My very blood? Will Phædra, in her frenzy,
Accuse herself, and seal her own destruction?
What will the king say? Gods! What fatal poison
Has love spread over all his house! Myself,
Full of a fire his hatred disapproves,
How changed he finds me from the son he knew!
With dark forebodings is my mind alarm'd,

But innocence has surely naught to fear.
Come, let us go, and in some other place
Consider how I best may move my sire
To tenderness, and tell him of a flame
Vex'd but not vanquish'd by a father's blame.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT IV

[*Enter THESEUS and CENONE.*]

THESEUS. Ah! What is this I hear? Presumptuous traitor!
And would he have disgraced his father's honor?
With what relentless footsteps Fate pursues me!
Whither I go I know not, nor where now
I am. O kind affection ill repaid!
Audacious scheme! Abominable thought!
To reach the object of his foul desire
The wretch disdain'd not to use violence.
I know this sword that served him in his fury,
The sword I gave him for a nobler use.
Could not the sacred ties of blood restrain him?
And Phædra—was she loath to have him punish'd?
She held her tongue. Was that to spare the culprit?

CENONE. Nay, but to spare a most unhappy father.
O'erwhelmed with shame that her eyes should have kindled
So infamous a flame and prompted him
To crime so heinous, Phædra would have died.
I saw her raise her arm, and ran to save her.
To me alone you owe it that she lives;
And, in my pity both for her and you,
Have I against my will interpreted
Her tears.

THESEUS. The traitor! He might well turn pale.
'Twas fear that made him tremble when he saw me.
I was astonish'd that he show'd no pleasure;
His frigid greeting chill'd my tenderness.
But was this guilty passion that devours him
Declared already ere I banish'd him
From Athens?

CENONE. Sire, remember how the queen
Urged you. Illicit love caused all her hatred.

THESEUS. And then this fire broke out again at Trœzen?

CENONE. Sire, I have told you all. Too long the queen
Has been allow'd to bear her grief alone.

Let me now leave you and attend to her. [Exit.]

[Enter HIPPOLYTUS.]

THESEUS. Ah! There he is. Great gods! That noble mien
Might well deceive an eye less fond than mine!
Why should the sacred stamp of virtue gleam
Upon the forehead of an impious wretch!
Ought not the blackness of a traitor's heart
To show itself by sure and certain signs?

HIPPOLYTUS. My father, may I ask what fatal cloud
Has troubled your majestic countenance?
Dare you not trust this secret to your son?

THESEUS. Traitor, how dare you show yourself before me?
Monster, whom Heaven's bolts have spared too long!
Survivor of that robber crew whereof
I cleansed the earth. After your brutal lust
Scorn'd even to respect my marriage bed,
You venture—you, my hated foe—to come
Into my presence, here, where all is full
Of your foul infamy, instead of seeking
Some unknown land that never heard my name.
Fly, traitor, fly! Stay not to tempt the wrath
That I can scarce restrain, nor brave my hatred.
Disgrace enough have I incurr'd forever
In being father of so vile a son,
Without your death staining indelibly
The glorious record of my noble deeds.
Fly, and unless you wish quick punishment
To add you to the criminals cut off
By me, take heed this sun that lights us now
Ne'er see you more set foot upon this soil.
I tell you once again,—fly, haste, return not,
Rid all my realms of your atrocious presence.

To thee, to thee, great Neptune, I appeal;
If erst I clear'd thy shores of foul assassins,
Recall thy promise to reward those efforts,
Crown'd with success, by granting my first pray'r.
Confined for long in close captivity,
I have not yet call'd on thy pow'rful aid,
Sparing to use the valued privilege
Till at mine utmost need. The time is come,
I ask thee now. Avenge a wretched father!
I leave this traitor to thy wrath; in blood
Quench his outrageous fires, and by thy fury
Theseus will estimate thy favor tow'rds him.

HIPPOLYTUS. Phædra accuses me of lawless passion!
This crowning horror all my soul confounds;
Such unexpected blows, falling at once,
O'erwhelm me, choke my utterance, strike me dumb.

THESEUS. Traitor, you reckon'd that in timid silence
Phædra would bury your brutality.
You should not have abandon'd in your flight
The sword that in her hands help to condemn you
Or rather, to complete your perfidy,
You should have robb'd her both of speech and life.

HIPPOLYTUS. Justly indignant at a lie so black
I might be pardon'd if I told the truth;
But it concerns your honor to conceal it.
Approve the reverence that shuts my mouth;
And, without wishing to increase your woes,
Examine closely what my life has been.
Great crimes are never single, they are link'd
To former faults. He who has once transgress'd
May violate at last all that men hold
Most sacred; vice, like virtue, has degrees
Of progress; innocence was never seen
To sink at once into the lowest depths
Of guilt. No virtuous man can in a day
Turn traitor, murderer, an incestuous wretch.
The nursling of a chaste, heroic mother,
I have not proved unworthy of my birth.

Pittheus, whose wisdom is by all esteem'd,
Deign'd to instruct me when I left her hands.
It is no wish of mine to vaunt my merits,
But, if I may lay claim to any virtue,
I think beyond all else I have display'd
Abhorrence of those sins with which I'm charged.
For this Hippolytus is known in Greece,
So continent that he is deem'd austere.
All know my abstinence inflexible:
The daylight is not purer than my heart.
How, then, could I, burning with fire profane—

THESEUS. Yes, dastard, 't is that very pride condemns you.
I see the odious reason of your coldness:
Phædra alone bewitch'd your shameless eyes;
Your soul, to others' charms indifferent,
Disdain'd the blameless fires of lawful love.

HIPPOLYTUS. No, father, I have hidden it too long,
This heart has not disdain'd a sacred flame.
Here at your feet I own my real offense:
I love, and love in truth where you forbid me;
Bound to Aricia by my heart's devotion,
The child of Pallas has subdued your son.
A rebel to your laws, her I adore,
And breathe forth ardent sighs for her alone.

THESEUS. You love her? Heav'ns!

But no, I see the trick.

You feign a crime to justify yourself.

HIPPOLYTUS. Sir, I have shunn'd her for six months, and
still

Love her. To you yourself I came to tell it,
Trembling the while. Can nothing clear your mind
Of your mistake? What oath can reassure you?
By heav'n and earth and all the pow'rs of nature—

THESEUS. The wicked never shrink from perjury.
Cease, cease, and spare me irksome protestations,
If your false virtue has no other aid.

HIPPOLYTUS. Tho' it to you seem false and insincere,
Phædra has secret cause to know it true.

THESEUS. Ah, how your shamelessness excites my wrath!

HIPPOLYTUS. What is my term and place of banishment?

THESEUS. Were you beyond the Pillars of Alcides,
Your perjured presence were too near me yet.

HIPPOLYTUS. What friends will pity me, when you forsake
And think me guilty of a crime so vile?

THESEUS. Go, look you out for friends who hold in honor
Adultery and clap their hands at incest,
Low, lawless traitors, steep'd in infamy,
The fit protectors of a knave like you.

HIPPOLYTUS. Are incest and adultery the words
You cast at me? I hold my tongue. Yet think
What mother Phædra had; too well you know
Her blood, not mine, is tainted with those horrors.

THESEUS. What! Does your rage before my eyes lose all
Restraint? For the last time—out of my sight!
Hence, traitor! Wait not till a father's wrath
Force thee away 'mid general execration.

[Exit HIPPOLYTUS.]

THESEUS [alone]. Wretch! Thou must meet inevitable
ruin.

Neptune has sworn by Styx—to gods themselves
A dreadful oath—and he will execute
His promise. Thou canst not escape his vengeance.
I loved thee; and, in spite of thine offense,
My heart is troubled by anticipation
For thee. But thou hast earn'd thy doom too well.
Had father ever greater cause for rage?
Just gods, who see the grief that overwhelms me,
Why was I cursed with such a wicked son?

[Enter PHÆDRA.]

PHÆDRA. My lord, I come to you, fill'd with just dread.
Your voice raised high in anger reach'd mine ears,
And much I fear that deeds have follow'd threats.
Oh, if there yet is time, spare your own offspring,
Respect your race and blood, I do beseech you.
Let me not hear that blood cry from the ground;

Save me the horror and perpetual pain
Of having caused his father's hand to shed it.

THESEUS. No, madam, from that stain my hand is free,
But, for all that, the wretch has not escaped me.
The hand of an Immortal now is charged
With his destruction. 'Tis a debt that Neptune
Owes me, and you shall be avenged.

PHÆDRA. A debt
Owed you? Pray'rs made in anger—

THESEUS. Never fear
That they will fail. Rather join yours to mine.
In all their blackness paint for me his crimes,
And fan my tardy passion to white heat.
But yet you know not all his infamy;
His rage against you overflows in slanders;
Your mouth, he says, is full of all deceit,
He says Aricia has his heart and soul,
That her alone he loves.

PHÆDRA. Aricia?

THESEUS. Aye,
He said it to my face: an idle pretext!
A trick that gulls me not! Let us hope Neptune
Will do him speedy justice. To his altars
I go, to urge performance of his oaths. [Exit.]

PHÆDRA [*alone*]. Ah, he is gone! What tidings struck
mine ears?

What fire, half smother'd, in my heart revives?
What fatal stroke falls like a thunderbolt?
Stung by remorse that would not let me rest,
I tore myself out of Ænone's arms,
And flew to help Hippolytus with all
My soul and strength. Who knows if that repentance
Might not have moved me to accuse myself?
And, if my voice had not been choked with shame,
Perhaps I had confess'd the frightful truth.
Hippolytus can feel, but not for me!
Aricia has his heart, his plighted troth.
Ye gods, when, deaf to all my sighs and tears,

He arm'd his eye with scorn, his brow with threats,
 I deem'd his heart, impregnable to love,
 Was fortified 'gainst all my sex alike.
 And yet another has prevail'd to tame
 His pride, another has secured his favor.
 Perhaps he has a heart easily melted;
 I am the only one he cannot bear!
 And shall I charge myself with his defense?

[Enter CÆNONE.]

PHÆDRA. Know you, dear nurse, what I have learn'd just now?

CÆNONE. No; but I come in truth with trembling limbs.
 I dreaded with what purpose you went forth.
 The fear of fatal madness made me pale.

PHÆDRA. Who would have thought it, nurse? I had a rival.

CÆNONE. A rival?

PHÆDRA. Yes, he loves. I cannot doubt it.
 This wild untamable Hippolytus,
 Who scorn'd to be admired, whom lovers' sighs
 Wearied, this tiger, whom I fear'd to rouse,
 Fawns on a hand that has subdued his pride:
 Aricia has found entrance to his heart.

CÆNONE. Aricia?

PHÆDRA. Ah! anguish as yet untried!
 For what new tortures am I still reserved?
 All I have undergone, transports of passion,
 Longings and fears, the horrors of remorse,
 The shame of being spurn'd with contumely,
 Were feeble foretastes of my present torments.
 They love each other! By what secret charm
 Have they deceived me? Where, and when, and how
 Met they? You knew it all. Why was I cozen'd?
 You never told me of those stolen hours
 Of amorous converse. Have they oft been seen
 Talking together? Did they seek the shades
 Of thickest woods? Alas! full freedom had they
 To see each other. Heav'n approved their sighs;

They loved without the consciousness of guilt;
And every morning's sun for them shone clear,
While I, an outcast from the face of Nature,
Shunn'd the bright day, and sought to hide myself.
Death was the only god whose aid I dared
To ask: I waited for the grave's release.
Water'd with tears, nourish'd with gall, my woe
Was all too closely watch'd; I did not dare
To weep without restraint. In mortal dread
Tasting this dangerous solace, I disguised
My terror 'neath a tranquil countenance,
And oft had I to check my tears, and smile.

ÆNONE. What fruit will they enjoy of their vain love?
They will not see each other more.

PHÆDRA. That love
Will last forever. Even while I speak,
Ah, fatal thought, they laugh to scorn the madness
Of my distracted heart. In spite of exile
That soon must part them, with a thousand oaths
They seal yet closer union. Can I suffer
A happiness, Ænone, which insults me?
I crave your pity. She must be destroy'd.
My husband's wrath against a hateful stock
Shall be revived, nor must the punishment
Be light: the sister's guilt passes the brothers'.
I will entreat him in my jealous rage.

What am I saying? Have I lost my senses?
Is Phædra jealous, and will she implore
Theseus for help? My husband lives, and yet
I burn. For whom? Whose heart is this I claim
As mine? At every word I say, my hair
Stands up with horror. Guilt henceforth has pass'd
All bounds. Hypocrisy and incest breathe
At once thro' all. My murderous hands are ready
To spill the blood of guileless innocence.
Do I yet live, wretch that I am, and dare
To face this holy Sun from whom I spring?
My father's sire was king of all the gods;

My ancestors fill all the universe.
Where can I hide? In the dark realms of Pluto?
But there my father holds the fatal urn;
His hand awards th' irrevocable doom:
Minos is judge of all the ghosts in hell.
Ah! how his awful shade will start and shudder
When he shall see his daughter brought before him,
Forced to confess sins of such varied dye,
Crimes it may be unknown to hell itself!
What wilt thou say, my father, at a sight
So dire? I think I see thee drop the urn,
And, seeking some unheard-of punishment,
Thyself become my executioner.
Spare me! A cruel goddess has destroy'd
Thy race; and in my madness recognize
Her wrath. Alas! My aching heart has reap'd
No fruit of pleasure from the frightful crime
The shame of which pursues me to the grave,
And ends in torment life-long misery.

ÆNONE. (Ah, madam, pray dismiss a groundless dread:
Look less severely on a venial error.
You love. We cannot conquer destiny.
You were drawn on as by a fatal charm.)
Is that a marvel without precedent
Among us? Has love triumph'd over you,
And o'er none else? Weakness is natural
To man. A mortal, to a mortal's lot
Submit. You chafe against a yoke that others
Have long since borne. The dwellers in Olympus,
The gods themselves, who terrify with threats
The sins of men, have burn'd with lawless fires.

PHÆDRA. What words are these I hear? What counsel this
You dare to give me? Will you to the end
Pour poison in mine ears? You have destroy'd me.
You brought me back when I should else have quitted
The light of day, made me forget my duty
And see Hippolytus, till then avoided.
What hast thou done? Why did your wicked mouth

With blackest lies slander his blameless life?
 Perhaps you've slain him, and the impious pray'r
 Of an unfeeling father has been answer'd.
 No, not another word! Go, hateful monster;
 Away, and leave me to my piteous fate.
 May Heav'n with justice pay you your deserts!
 And may your punishment forever be
 A terror to all those who would, like you,
 Nourish with artful wiles the weaknesses
 Of princes, push them to the brink of ruin
 To which their heart inclines, and smooth the path
 Of guilt. Such flatterers doth the wrath of Heav'n
 Bestow on kings as its most fatal gift. [Exit.]

CENONE [*alone*]. O gods! to serve her what have I not
 done?

This is the due reward that I have won. [Exit.]

ACT V

[*Enter HIPPOLYTUS and ARICIA.*]

ARICIA. Can you keep silent in this mortal peril?
 Your father loves you. Will you leave him thus
 Deceived? If in your cruel heart you scorn
 My tears, content to see me nevermore,
 Go, part from poor Aricia; but at least,
 Going, secure the safety of your life.
 Defend your honor from a shameful stain.
 And force your father to recall his pray'rs.
 There yet is time. Why out of mere caprice
 Leave the field free to Phædra's calumnies?
 Let Theseus know the truth.

HIPPOLYTUS. Could I say more,
 Without exposing him to dire disgrace?
 How should I venture, by revealing all,
 To make a father's brow grow red with shame?
 The odious mystery to you alone
 Is known. My heart has been outpour'd to none

(Judge if I love you) all I fain would hide
E'en from myself. But think under what seal
I spoke. Forget my words, if that may be;
And never let so pure a mouth disclose
This dreadful secret. Let us trust to Heav'n
My vindication, for the gods are just;
For their own honor will they clear the guiltless;
Sooner or later punish'd for her crime,
Phædra will not escape the shame she merits.
I ask no other favor than your silence;
In all besides I give my wrath free scope.
Make your escape from this captivity,
Be bold to bear me company in flight;
Linger not here on this accursèd soil,
Where virtue breathes a pestilential air.
To cover your departure take advantage
Of this confusion, caused by my disgrace.
The means of flight are ready, be assured;
You have as yet no other guards than mine.
Pow'rful defenders will maintain our quarrel;
Argos spreads open arms, and Sparta calls us.
Let us appeal for justice to our friends,
Nor suffer Phædra, in a common ruin
Joining us both, to hunt us from the throne,
And aggrandize her son by robbing us.
Embrace this happy opportunity:
What fear restrains? You seem to hesitate.
Your interest alone prompts me to urge
Boldness. When I am all on fire, how comes it
That you are ice? Fear you to follow then
A banish'd man?

ARICIA. Ah, dear to me would be
Such exile! With what joy, my fate to yours
United, could I live, by all the world
Forgotten! But not yet has that sweet tie
Bound us together. How then can I steal
Away with you? I know the strictest honor

Forbids me not out of your father's hands
To free myself; this is no parent's home,
And flight is lawful when one flies from tyrants.
But you, sir, love me; and my virtue shrinks—

HIPPOLYTUS. No, no, your reputation is to me
As dear as to yourself. A nobler purpose
Brings me to you. Fly from your foes, and follow
A husband. Heav'n, that sends us these misfortunes,
Sets free from human instruments the pledge
Between us. Torches do not always light
The face of Hymen.

At the gates of Trœzen,
'Mid ancient tombs where princes of my race
Lie buried, stands a temple ne'er approach'd
By perjurers, where mortals dare not make
False oaths, for instant punishment befalls
The guilty. Falsehood knows no stronger check
Than what is present there—the fear of death
That cannot be avoided. Thither then
We'll go, if you consent, and swear to love
Forever, take the guardian god to witness
Our solemn vows, and his paternal care
Entreat. I will invoke the name of all
The holiest Pow'rs; chaste Dian, and the Queen
Of Heav'n, yea all the gods who know my heart
Will guarantee my sacred promises.

ARICIA. The king draws near. Depart—make no delay.
To mask my flight, I linger yet one moment.
Go you; and leave with me some trusty guide,
To lead my timid footsteps to your side.

[*Exit* HIPPOLYTUS.]

[*Enter* THESEUS and ISMENE.]

THESEUS. Ye gods, throw light upon my troubled mind,
Show me the truth which I am seeking here.

ARICIA [*aside to* ISMENE]. Get ready, dear Ismene, for our
flight.

[*Exit* ISMENE.]

THESEUS. Your color comes and goes, you seem confused, Madam! What business had my son with you?

ARICIA. Sire, he was bidding me farewell forever.

THESEUS. Your eyes, it seems, can tame that stubborn pride;

And the first sighs he breathes are paid to you.

ARICIA. I can't deny the truth; he has not, sire,
Inherited your hatred and injustice;
He did not treat me like a criminal.

THESEUS. That is to say, he swore eternal love.
Do not rely on that inconstant heart;
To others has he sworn as much before.

ARICIA. He, sire?

THESEUS. You ought to check his roving taste.
How could you bear a partnership so vile?

ARICIA. And how can you endure that vilest slanders
Should make a life so pure as black as pitch?
Have you so little knowledge of his heart?
Do you so ill distinguish between guilt
And innocence? What mist before your eyes
Blinds them to virtue so conspicuous?
Ah! 't is too much to let false tongues defame him.
Repent; call back your murderous wishes, sire;
Fear, fear lest Heav'n in its severity
Hate you enough to hear and grant your pray'rs.
Oft in their wrath the gods accept our victims,
And oftentimes chastise us with their gifts.

THESEUS. No, vainly would you cover up his guilt.
Your love is blind to his depravity.
But I have witness irreproachable:

Tears have I seen, true tears, that may be trusted.

ARICIA. Take heed, my lord. Your hands invincible
Have rid the world of monsters numberless;
But all are not destroy'd, one you have left
Alive—Your son forbids me to say more;
Knowing with what respect he still regards you,
I should too much distress him if I dared
Complete my sentence. I will imitate

His reverence, and, to keep silence, leave you. [Exit.]

THESEUS [*alone*]. What is there in her mind? What meaning lurks

In speech begun but to be broken short?

Would both deceive me with a vain pretense?

Have they conspired to put me to the torture?

And yet, despite my stern severity,

What plaintive voice cries deep within my heart?

A secret pity troubles and alarms me.

Cenone shall be questioned once again,

I must have clearer light upon this crime.

Guards, bid Cenone come, and come alone.

[Enter PANOPE.]

PANOPE. I know not what the queen intends to do,
But from her agitation dread the worst.

Fatal despair is painted on her features;

Death's pallor is already in her face.

Cenone, shamed and driven from her sight,

Has cast herself into the ocean depths.

None knows what prompted her to deed so rash;

And now the waves hide her from us forever.

THESEUS. What say you?

PANOPE. Her sad fate seems to have added
Fresh trouble to the queen's tempestuous soul.

Sometimes, to soothe her secret pain, she clasps

Her children close, and bathes them with her tears;

Then suddenly, the mother's love forgotten,

She thrusts them from her with a look of horror.

She wanders to and fro with doubtful steps;

Her vacant eye no longer knows us. Thrice

She wrote, and thrice did she, changing her mind,

Destroy the letter ere 'twas well begun.

Vouchsafe to see her, sire: vouchsafe to help her. [Exit.]

THESEUS. Heav'ns! Is Cenone dead, and Phædra bent
On dying too? Oh, call me back my son!

Let him defend himself, and I am ready

To hear him. Be not hasty to bestow

Thy fatal bounty, Neptune; let my pray'rs
Rather remain ever unheard. Too soon
I lifted cruel hands, believing lips
That may have lied! Ah! What despair may follow!

[Enter THERAMENES.]

THESEUS. Theramenes, is't thou? Where is my son?
I gave him to thy charge from tenderest childhood.
But whence these tears that overflow thine eyes?
How is it with my son?

THERAMENES. Concern too late!
Affection vain! Hippolytus is dead.

THESEUS. Gods!

THERAMENES. I have seen the flow'r of all mankind
Cut off, and I am bold to say that none
Deserved it less.

THESEUS. What! My son dead! When I
Was stretching out my arms to him, has Heav'n
Hasten'd his end? What was this sudden stroke?

THERAMENES. Scarce had we pass'd out of the gates of
Træzen,

He silent in his chariot, and his guards,
Downcast and silent too, around him ranged;
To the Mycenian road he turn'd his steeds,
Then, lost in thought, allow'd the reins to lie
Loose on their backs. His noble charges, erst
So full of ardor to obey his voice,
With head depress'd and melancholy eye
Seem'd now to mark his sadness and to share it.
A frightful cry, that issues from the deep,
With sudden discord rends the troubled air;
And from the bosom of the earth a groan
Is heard in answer to that voice of terror.
Our blood is frozen at our very hearts;
With bristling manes the list'ning steeds stand still.
Meanwhile upon the watery plain there rises
A mountain billow with mighty crest
Of foam, that shoreward rolls, and, as it breaks,

Before our eyes vomits a furious monster.
With formidable horns its brow is arm'd,
And all its body clothed with yellow scales,
In front a savage bull, behind a dragon
Turning and twisting in impatient rage.
Its long continued bellowings make the shore
Tremble; the sky seems horror-struck to see it;
The earth with terror quakes; its poisonous breath
Infects the air. The wave that brought it ebbs
In fear. All fly, forgetful of the courage
That cannot aid, and in a neighboring temple
Take refuge—all save bold Hippolytus,
A hero's worthy son, he stays his steeds,
Seizes his darts, and, rushing forward, hurls
A missile with sure aim that wounds the monster
Deep in the flank. With rage and pain it springs
E'en to the horses' feet, and, roaring, falls,
Writhes in the dust, and shows a fiery throat
That covers them with flames, and blood, and smoke.
Fear lends them wings; deaf to his voice for once,
And heedless of the curb, they onward fly.
Their master wastes his strength in efforts vain;
With foam and blood each courser's bit is red.
Some say a god, amid this wild disorder,
Is seen with goads pricking their dusty flanks.
O'er jagged rocks they rush urged on by terror;
Crash! goes the axle-tree. Th' intrepid youth
Sees his car broken up, flying to pieces;
He falls himself entangled in the reins.
Pardon my grief. That cruel spectacle
Will be for me a source of endless tears.
I saw thy hapless son, I saw him, sire,
Dragg'd by the horses that his hands had fed,
Pow'rless to check their fierce career, his voice
But adding to their fright, his body soon
One mass of wounds. Our cries of anguish fill
The plain. At last they slacken their swift pace,
Then stop, not far from those old tombs that mark

Where lie the ashes of his royal sires.
Panting I thither run, and after me
His guard, along the track stain'd with fresh blood
That reddens all the rocks; caught in the briers
Locks of his hair hang dripping, gory spoils!
I come, I call him. Stretching forth his hand,
He opes his dying eyes, soon closed again.
"The gods have robb'd me of a guiltless life,"
I hear him say: "Take care of sad Aricia
When I am dead. Dear friend, if e'er my father
Mourn, undeceived, his son's unhappy fate
Falsely accused; to give my spirit peace,
Tell him to treat his captive tenderly,
And to restore—" With that the hero's breath
Fails, and a mangled corpse lies in my arms,
A piteous object, trophy of the wrath
Of Heav'n—so changed, his father would not know him.

THESEUS. Alas, my son! Dear hope forever lost!
The ruthless gods have served me but too well.
For what a life of anguish and remorse
Am I reserved!

THERAMENES. Aricia at that instant,
Flying from you, comes timidly, to take him
For husband, there, in presence of the gods.
Thus drawing nigh, she sees the grass all red
And reeking, sees (sad sight for lover's eye!)
Hippolytus stretch'd there, pale and disfigured.
But, for a time doubtful of her misfortune,
Unrecognized the hero she adores,
She looks, and asks—"Where is Hippolytus?"
Only too sure at last that he lies there
Before her, with sad eyes that silently
Reproach the gods, she shudders, groans, and falls,
Swooning and all but lifeless, at his feet.
Ismene, all in tears, kneels down beside her,
And calls her back to life—life that is naught
But sense of pain. And I, to whom this light
Is darkness now, come to discharge the duty

The hero has imposed on me, to tell thee
 His last request—a melancholy task.
 But hither comes his mortal enemy.

[*Enter PHÆDRA, PANOPE, and GUARDS.*]

THESEUS. Madam, you've triumph'd, and my son is kill'd!
 Ah, but what room have I for fear! How justly
 Suspicion racks me that in blaming him
 I err'd! But he is dead; accept your victim;
 Rightly or wrongly slain, let your heart leap
 For joy. My eyes shall be forever blind
 Since you accuse him, I'll believe him guilty.
 His death affords me cause enough for tears,
 Without a foolish search for further light
 Which, pow'rless to restore him to my grief,
 Might only serve to make me more unhappy.
 Far from this shore and far from you I'll fly,
 For here the image of my mangled son
 Would haunt my memory and drive me mad.
 From the whole world I fain would banish me,
 For all the world seems to rise up in judgment
 Against me; and my very glory weights
 My punishment; for, were my name less known,
 'Twere easier to hide me. All the favors
 The gods have granted me I mourn and hate,
 Nor will I importune them with vain pray'rs
 Henceforth forever. Give me what they may,
 What they have taken will all else outweigh.

PHÆDRA. Theseus, I cannot hear you and keep silence:
 I must repair the wrong that he has suffer'd—
 Your son was innocent.

THESEUS. Unhappy father!
 And it was on your word that I condemn'd him!
 Think you such cruelty can be excused—

PHÆDRA. Moments to me are precious; hear me, Theseus.
 'Twas I who cast an eye of lawless passion
 On chaste and dutiful Hippolytus.
 Heav'n in my bosom kindled baleful fire,

And vile CEnone's cunning did the rest.)
She fear'd Hippolytus, knowing my madness,
Would make that passion known which he regarded
With horror; so advantage of my weakness
She took, and hasten'd to accuse him first.
For that she has been punish'd, tho' too mildly;
Seeking to shun my wrath she cast herself
Beneath the waves. The sword ere now had cut
My thread of life, but slander'd innocence
Made its cry heard, and I resolved to die
In a more lingering way, confessing first
My penitence to you. A poison, brought
To Athersn by Medea, runs thro' my veins.
Already in my heart the venom works,
Infusing there a strange and fatal chill;
Already as thro' thickening mists I see
The spouse to whom my presence is an outrage;
Death, from mine eyes veiling the light of heav'n,
Restores its purity that they defiled.

PANOPE. She dies, my lord!

THESEUS. Would that the memory
Of her disgraceful deed could perish with her!
Ah, disabused too late! Come, let us go,
And with the blood of mine unhappy son
Mingle our tears, clasping his dear remains,
In deep repentance for a pray'r detested.
Let him be honor'd as he well deserves;
And, to appease his sore offended ghost,
Be her near kinsmen's guilt whate'er it may,
Aricia shall be held my daughter from to-day.

[*Exeunt omnes.*]

RIDERS TO THE SEA

(1904)

BY

JOHN SYNGE

Reprinted by special permission of John W. Luce and Company.

CHARACTERS

MAURYA, *an old woman.*

BARTLEY, *her son.*

CATHLEEN, *her daughter.*

NORA, *a younger daughter.*

Men and Women.

RIDERS TO THE SEA

SCENE.—*An Island off the West of Ireland. Cottage kitchen, with nets, oil skins, spinning-wheel, some new boards standing by the wall, etc.*

[CATHLEEN, a girl of about twenty, finishes kneading cake, and puts it down in the potoven by the fire; then wipes her hands, and begins to spin at the wheel. NORA, a young girl, puts her head in at the door.]

NORA [*in a low voice*]. Where is she?

CATHLEEN. She's lying down, God help her, and may be sleeping, if she's able.

[NORA comes in softly, and takes a bundle from under her shawl.]

CATHLEEN [*spinning the wheel rapidly*]. What is it you have?

NORA. The young priest is after bringing them. It's a shirt and a plain stocking were got off a drowned man in Donegal.

[CATHLEEN stops her wheel with a sudden movement, and leans out to listen.]

NORA. We're to find out if it's Michael's they are; some time herself will be down looking by the sea.

CATHLEEN. How would they be Michael's, Nora? How would he go the length of that way to the far north?

NORA. The young priest says he's known the like of it. "If it's Michael's they are," says he, "you can tell herself he's got a clean burial by the grace of God, and if they're not his, let no one say a word about them, for she'll be getting her death," says he, "with crying and lamenting."

[The door which NORA half closed is blown open by a gust of wind.]

CATHLEEN [*looking out anxiously*]. Did you ask him would

he stop Bartley going this day with the horses to the Galway fair?

NORA. "I won't stop him," says he, "but let you not be afraid. Herself does be saying prayers half through the night, and the Almighty God won't leave her destitute," says he, "with no son living."

CATHLEEN. Is the sea bad by the white rocks, Nora?

NORA. Middling bad, God help us. There's a great roaring in the west, and it's worse it'll be getting when the tide's turned to the wind. [*She goes over to the table with the bundle.*] Shall I open it now?

CATHLEEN. Maybe she'd wake up on us, and come in before we'd done. [*Coming to the table.*] It's a long time we'll be, and the two of us crying.

NORA [*goes to the inner door and listens*]. She's moving about on the bed. She'll be coming in a minute.

CATHLEEN. Give me the ladder, and I'll put them up in the turf-loft, the way she won't know of them at all, and maybe when the tide turns she'll be going down to see would he be floating from the east.

[*They put the ladder against the gable of the chimney;*

CATHLEEN goes up a few steps and hides the bundle in the turf-loft; MAURYA comes from the inner room.]

MAURYA [*looking up at CATHLEEN and speaking querulously*]. Isn't it turf enough you have for this day and evening?

CATHLEEN. There's a cake baking at the fire for a short space [*throwing down the turf*], and Bartley will want it when the tide turns if he goes to Connemara.

[*NORA picks up the turf and puts it round the pot oven.*]

MAURYA [*sitting down on a stool at the fire*]. He won't go this day with the wind rising from the south and west. He won't go this day, for the young priest will stop him surely.

NORA. He'll not stop him, mother, and I heard Eamon Simon and Stephen Pheety and Colum Shawn saying he would go.

MAURYA. Where is he itself?

NORA. He went down to see would there be another boat sailing in the week, and I'm thinking it won't be long till he's

here now, for the tide's turning at the green head, and the hooker's tacking from the east.

CATHLEEN. I hear someone passing the big stones.

NORA [looking out]. He's coming now, and he in a hurry.

BARTLEY [comes in and looks round the room. Speaking sadly and quietly]. Where is the bit of new rope, Cathleen, was bought in Connemara?

CATHLEEN [coming down]. Give it to him, Nora; it's on a nail by the white boards. I hung it up this morning, for the pig with the black feet was eating it.

NORA [giving him a rope]. Is that it, Bartley?

MAURYA. You'd do right to leave that rope, Bartley, hanging by the boards. [*Bartley takes the rope.*] It will be wanting in this place, I'm telling you, if Michael is washed up to-morrow morning, or the next morning, or any morning in the week, for it's a deep grave we'll make him by the grace of God.

BARTLEY [beginning to work with the rope]. I've no halter the way I can ride down on the mare, and I must go now quickly. This is the one boat going for two weeks or beyond it, and the fair will be a good fair for horses I heard them saying below.

MAURYA. It's a hard thing they'll be saying below if the body is washed up and there's no man in it to make the coffin, and I after giving a big price for the finest white boards you'd find in Connemara. [*She looks round at the boards.*]

BARTLEY. How would it be washed up, and we after looking each day for nine days, and a strong wind blowing a while back from the west and south?

MAURYA. If it wasn't found itself, that wind is raising the sea, and there was a star up against the moon, and it rising in the night. If it was a hundred horses, or a thousand horses you had itself, what is the price of a thousand horses against a son where there is one son only?

BARTLEY [working at the halter, to CATHLEEN]. Let you go down each day, and see the sheep aren't jumping in on the rye, and if the jobber comes you can sell the pig with the black feet if there is a good price going.

MAURYA. How would the like of her get a good price for a pig?

BARTLEY [*to CATHLEEN*]. If the west wind holds with the last bit of the moon let you and Nora get up weed enough for another cock for the kelp. It's hard set we'll be from this day with no one in it but one man to work.

MAURYA. It's hard set we'll be surely the day you're drowned with the rest. What way will I live and the girls with me, and I an old woman looking for the grave?

[*BARTLEY lays down the halter, takes off his old coat, and puts on a newer one of the same flannel.*]

BARTLEY [*to NORA*]. Is she coming to the pier?

NORA [*looking out*]. She's passing the green head and letting fall her sails.

BARTLEY [*getting his purse and tobacco*]. I'll have half an hour to go down, and you'll see me coming again in two days or in three days, or maybe in four days if the wind is bad.

MAURYA [*turning round to the fire, and putting her shawl over her head*]. Isn't it a hard and cruel man won't hear a word from an old woman, and she holding him from the sea?

CATHLEEN. It's the life of a young man to be going on the sea, and who would listen to an old woman with one thing and she saying it over?

BARTLEY [*taking the halter*]. I must go now quickly. I'll ride down on the red mare, and the gray pony'll run behind me. . . . The blessing of God on you. [*He goes out.*]

MAURYA [*crying out as he is in the door*]. He's gone now, God spare us, and we'll not see him again. He's gone now, and when the black night is falling I'll have no son left me in the world.

CATHLEEN. Why wouldn't you give him your blessing and he looking round in the door? Isn't it sorrow enough is on everyone in this house without your sending him out with an unlucky word behind him, and a hard word in his ear?

[*MAURYA takes up the tongs and begins raking the fire aimlessly without looking round.*]

NORA [*turning toward her*]. You're taking away the turf from the cake.

CATHLEEN [*crying out*]. The Son of God forgive us, Nora, we're after forgetting his bit of bread. [*She comes over to the fire.*]

NORA. And it's destroyed he'll be going till dark night, and he after eating nothing since the sun went up.

CATHLEEN [*turning the cake out of the oven*]. It's destroyed he'll be, surely. There's no sense left on any person in a house where an old woman will be talking forever.

[*MAURYA sways herself on her stool.*]

CATHLEEN [*cutting off some of the bread and rolling it in a cloth; to MAURYA*]. Let you go down now to the spring well and give him this and he passing. You'll see him then and the dark word will be broken, and you can say "God speed you," the way he'll be easy in his mind.

MAURYA [*taking the bread*]. Will I be in it as soon as himself?

CATHLEEN. If you go now quickly.

MAURYA [*standing up unsteadily*]. It's hard set I am to walk.

CATHLEEN [*looking at her anxiously*]. Give her the stick, Nora, or maybe she'll slip on the big stones.

NORA. What stick?

CATHLEEN. The stick Michael brought from Connemara.

MAURYA [*taking a stick NORA gives her*]. In the big world the old people do be leaving things after them for their sons and children, but in this place it is the young men do be leaving things behind for them that do be old.

[*She goes out slowly. NORA goes over to the ladder.*]

CATHLEEN. Wait, Nora, maybe she'd turn back quickly. She's that sorry, God help her, you wouldn't know the thing she'd do.

NORA. Is she gone round by the bush?

CATHLEEN [*looking out*]. She's gone now. Throw it down quickly, for the Lord knows when she'll be out of it again.

NORA [*getting the bundle from the loft*]. The young priest said he'd be passing tomorrow, and we might go down and speak to him below if it's Michael's they are surely.

CATHLEEN [*taking the bundle*]. Did he say what way they were found?

NORA [*coming down*]. "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN [*trying to open the bundle*]. Give me a knife, Nora; the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA [*giving her a knife*]. I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN [*cutting the string*]. It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be seven days you'd be in Donegal.

NORA. And what time would a man take, and he floating? [CATHLEEN *opens the bundle and takes out a bit of stocking. They look at them eagerly.*]

CATHLEEN [*in a low voice*]. The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA. I'll get his shirt off the hook the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner.*] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it [*pointing to the corner*]. There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do. [NORA *brings it to her and they compare the flannel.*] It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself, aren't there great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA [*who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*]. It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN [*taking the stocking*]. It's a plain stocking.

NORA. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and

I put up three score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN [*counts the stitches*]. It's that number is in it. [*Crying out.*] Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA [*swinging herself round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*]. And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN [*after an instant*]. Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA [*looking out*]. She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN. Put these things away before she'll come in. Maybe it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA [*helping CATHLEEN to close the bundle*]. We'll put them here in the corner. [*They put them into a hole in the chimney corner. CATHLEEN goes back to the spinning-wheel*]. Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

[*NORA sits down at the chimney corner, with her back to the door. MAURYA comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and NORA points to the bundle of bread.*]

CATHLEEN [*after spinning for a moment*]. You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[*MAURYA begins to keen softly, without turning round.*]

CATHLEEN. Did you see him riding down?

[*MAURYA goes on keening.*]

CATHLEEN [*a little impatiently*]. God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you.

MAURYA [*with a weak voice*]. My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN [*as before*]. Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA. I seen the fearfulest thing.

CATHLEEN [*leaves her wheel and looks out*]. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the gray pony behind him.

MAURYA [*starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white tossed hair. With a frightened voice*]. The gray pony behind him?

CATHLEEN [*coming to the fire*]. What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA [*speaking very slowly*]. I've seen the fearfulest thing any person has seen since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN and NORA. Uah! [*They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.*]

NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the gray pony behind him. [*She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes.*] The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen.

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN [*speaking softly*]. You did not, mother; it wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial by the grace of God.

MAURYA [*a little defiantly*]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare; and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "The blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the gray pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes on him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN [*begins to keen*]. It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed, surely.

NORA. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God wouldn't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA [*in a low voice, but clearly*]. It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming to the world—and some of them were found and some of them were not found but they're gone now the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found, after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on the one plank, and in by that door.

[*She pauses for a moment; the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.*]

NORA [*in a whisper*]. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the northeast?

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper*]. There's someone after crying out by the seashore.

MAURYA [*continues without hearing anything*]. There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign was seen of them when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curagh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[*She pauses with her hand stretched out toward the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.*]

MAURYA [*half in a dream, to CATHLEEN*]. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[*She reaches out and hands MAURYA the clothes that belong to MICHAEL. MAURYA stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands. NORA looks out.*]

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them and there's water dripping out of it and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper to the women who have come in*]. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is surely, God rest his soul.

[*Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of BARTLEY, laid on a plank, with a bit of sail over it, and lay it on the table*].

CATHLEEN [*to the women, as they are doing so*]. What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The gray pony knocked him into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[*MAURYA has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement. CATHLEEN and NORA kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.*]

MAURYA [*raising her head and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*]. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call

now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the east, and the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. [*To NORA.*] Give me the Holy Water, Nora; there's a small sup still on the dresser. [*NORA gives it to her. MAURYA drops MICHAEL'S clothes across BARTLEY'S feet, and sprinkles the Holy Water over him.*] It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'd be saying: but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking. *And*

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself and saying prayers under her breath.*]

CATHLEEN [*to an old man*]. Maybe ~~yourself~~ and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have a new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN [*looking at the boards*]. Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[*MAURYA stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of MICHAEL'S clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*]

NORA [*in a whisper to CATHLEEN*]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would anyone have thought that?

CATHLEEN [*slowly and clearly*]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on BARTLEY's feet*]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may He have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of everyone is left living in the world. [*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away. MAURYA continuing:*] Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again and the curtain falls slowly.*]

THE MISANTHROPE

(1666)

(LE MISANTHROPE)

BY

MOLIÈRE

(JEAN BAPTISTE POQUELIN)

•

CHARACTERS

ALCESTE, *in love with Célimène.*

PHILINTE, *his friend.*

ORONTE, *in love with Célimène.*

CÉLIMÈNE, *beloved by Alceste.*

ÉLIANTE, *her cousin.*

ARSINOÉ, *Célimène's friend.*

ACASTE, }
CLITANDRE, } *marquises.*

BASQUE, *servant to Célimène.*

DUBOIS, *servant to Alceste.*

An Officer of the Maréchaussée.

Scene—AT PARIS, IN CÉLIMÈNE'S HOUSE.

THE MISANTHROPE

ACT I

[*Enter PHILINTE and ALCESTE*].

PHILINTE. What is the matter? What ails you?

ALCESTE [*seated*]. Leave me, I pray.

PHILINTE. But, once more, tell me what strange whim . . .

ALCESTE. Leave me, I tell you; get out of my sight.

PHILINTE. But you might at least listen to people without growing angry.

ALCESTE. I choose to grow angry, and I do not choose to listen.

PHILINTE. I do not understand you in these abrupt moods; although we are friends, I am the first . . .

ALCESTE [*rising quickly*]. I, your friend? Lay not that flattering unction to your soul. I have until now professed to be so; but after what I have just seen of you, I tell you candidly that I am such no longer; I have no wish to occupy a place in a corrupt heart.

PHILINTE. I am then very much to be blamed from your point of view, Alceste?

ALCESTE. To be blamed? You ought to die from very shame; there is no excuse for such behaviour, and every man of honour must be disgusted at it. I see you almost stifle a man with attentions, show him the most ardent affection, and overwhelm him with protestations, offers, and vows of friendship. Your ebullitions of tenderness know no bounds; and when I ask you who that man is, you can scarcely tell me his name; your feelings for him, the moment you have turned your back, suddenly cool; you speak of him most indifferently to me. Zounds! I call it unworthy, base, and infamous, so far to lower one's self as to act contrary to one's own feelings; if, by some mischance, I had done such a

thing, I should hang myself at once out of sheer vexation.

PHILINTE. I do not see that it is a hanging matter at all; and I beg of you not to think it amiss if I ask you to show me some mercy, for I shall not hang myself, if it be all the same to you.

ALCESTE. That is a sorry joke.

PHILINTE. Then seriously, what would you have people do?

ALCESTE. I would have people be sincere, and like men of honour, speak no word that comes not from the heart.

PHILINTE. When a man comes and embraces you warmly, you must pay him back in his own coin, respond as best you can to his show of feeling, and return offer for offer, vow for vow.

ALCESTE. Not so. I cannot bear so base a method, which your fashionable people generally affect; there is nothing I detest so much as the contortions of these great time-and-lip servers, these affable dispensers of meaningless embraces, these obliging utterers of empty words who view every one in civilities, and treat the man of worth and the fop alike. What good does it do if a man heaps endearments on you, vows that he is your friend, that he believes in you, is full of zeal for you, esteems and loves you, and lauds you to the skies, when he rushes to do the same to the first rascalion he meets? No, no; no heart with the least self-respect cares for esteem so prostituted; he will hardly relish it, even when openly expressed, when he finds that he shares it with the whole universe. Preference must be based on esteem, and to esteem every one is to esteem no one. Since you abandon yourself to the vices of the times, zounds! you are not the man for me. I decline this over-complaisant kindness, which uses no discrimination. I like to be distinguished; and, to cut the matter short, the friend of all mankind is no friend of mine.

PHILINTE. But when we are of the world, we must conform to the outward civilities which custom demands.

ALCESTE. I deny it. We ought to punish pitilessly that shameful pretence of friendly intercourse. I like a man to be a man, and to show on all occasions the bottom of his heart

in his discourse. Let that be the thing to speak, and never let our feelings be hidden beneath vain compliments.

PHILINTE. There are many cases in which plain speaking would become ridiculous, and could hardly be tolerated. With all due allowance for your unbending honesty, it is as well to conceal the feelings sometimes. Would it be right or decent to tell thousands of people what we think of them? And when we meet with some one whom we hate or who displeases us, must we tell him so openly?

ALCESTE. Yes.

PHILINTE. What! Would you tell old Emilia that it ill becomes her to set up for a beauty at her age, and that the paint she uses disgusts everyone?

ALCESTE. Undoubtedly.

PHILINTE. Or Dorilas that he is a bore, and that there is no one at court who is not sick of hearing him boast of his courage and the lustre of his house?

ALCESTE. Decidedly so.

PHILINTE. You are jesting.

ALCESTE. I am not jesting at all, and I would not spare any one in that respect. It offends my eyes too much. Whether at Court or in town, I behold nothing but what provokes my spleen. I become quite melancholy and deeply grieved to see men behave to each other as they do. Everywhere I find nothing but base flattery, injustice, self-interest, deceit, roguery. I cannot bear it any longer; I am furious; and my intention is to break with all mankind.

PHILINTE. This philosophical spleen is somewhat too savage. I cannot but laugh to see you in these gloomy fits, and fancy that I perceive in us two, brought up together, the two brothers described in *The School for Husbands*, who . . .

ALCESTE. Good Heavens! Drop your insipid comparisons.

PHILINTE. Nay, seriously, leave off these vagaries. The world will not alter for all your meddling. And as plain speaking has such charms for you, I shall tell you frankly that this complaint of yours is as good as a play, wherever you go, and that all those invectives against the manners of the age make you a laughing stock to many people.

ALCESTE. So much the better! Zounds! So much the better! That is just what I want. It is a very good sign, and I rejoice at it. All men are so odious to me that I should be sorry to appear rational in their eyes.

PHILINTE. But do you wish harm to all mankind?

ALCESTE. Yes; I have conceived a terrible hatred for them.

PHILANTE. Shall all poor mortals, without exception, be included in this aversion? There are some, even in the age in which we live . . .

ALCESTE. No, they are all alike; and I hate all men: some, because they are wicked and mischievous; others because they lend themselves to the wicked, and have not that healthy contempt with which vice ought to inspire all virtuous minds. You can see how unjustly and excessively complacent people are to that bare-faced scoundrel with whom I am at law. You may plainly perceive the traitor through his mask; he is well known everywhere in his true colours; his rolling eyes and his honeyed tones impose only on those who do not know him. People are aware that this low-bred fellow, who deserves to be pilloried, has, by the dirtiest jobs, made his way in the world; and that the splendid position he has acquired makes merit repine and virtue blush. Yet whatever dishonourable epithets may be launched against him everywhere, nobody defends his wretched honour. Call him a rogue, an infamous wretch, a confounded scoundrel if you like, all the world will say "yea," and no one contradicts you. But for all that, his bowing and scraping are welcome everywhere; he is received, smiled upon, and wriggles himself into all kinds of society; and, if any appointment is to be secured by intriguing, he will carry the day over a man of the greatest worth. Zounds! these are mortal stabs to me, to see vice parleyed with; and sometimes I feel suddenly inclined to fly into a wilderness far from the approach of men.

PHILINTE. Great Heaven! Let us torment ourselves a little less about the vices of our age, and be a little more lenient to human nature. Let us not scrutinize it with the utmost severity, but look with some indulgence at its failings. In society, we need virtue to be more pliable. If we are too

wise, we may be equally to blame. Good sense avoids all extremes, and requires us to be soberly rational. This unbending and virtuous stiffness of ancient times shocks too much the ordinary customs of our own; it requires too great perfection from us mortals; we must yield to the times without being too stubborn; it is the height of folly to busy ourselves in correcting the world. I, as well as you, notice a hundred things every day which might be better managed, differently enacted; but whatever I may discover at any moment, people do not see me in a rage like you. I take men quietly just as they are; I accustom my mind to bear with what they do; and I believe that at Court, as well as in the city, my phlegm is as philosophical as your bile.

ALCESTE. But this phlegm, good sir, you who reason so well, could it not be disturbed by anything? And if perchance a friend should betray you, if he forms a subtle plot to get hold of what is yours, if people should try to spread evil reports about you; would you tamely submit to all this without flying into a rage?

PHILINTE. Ay, I look upon all these faults of which you complain as vices inseparably connected with human nature; in short, my mind is no more shocked at seeing a man a rogue, unjust, or selfish, than at seeing vultures eager for prey, mischievous apes, or fury-lashed wolves.

ALCESTE. What! I should see myself deceived, torn to pieces, robbed, without being . . . Zounds! I shall say no more about it; all this reasoning is beside the point!

PHILINTE. Upon my word, you would do well to keep silence. Rail a little less at your opponent, and attend a little more to your suit.

ALCESTE. That I shall not do; that is settled long ago.

PHILINTE. But whom then do you expect to solicit for you?

ALCESTE. Whom? Reason, my just right, equity.

PHILINTE. Shall you not pay a visit to any of the judges?

ALCESTE. No. Is my cause unjust or dubious?

PHILINTE. I am agreed on that; but you know what harm intrigues do, and . . .

ALCESTE. No. I am resolved not to stir a step. I am either right or wrong.

PHILINTE. Do not trust to that.

ALCESTE. I shall not budge an inch.

PHILINTE. Your opponent is powerful, and by his under-hand work, may induce . . .

ALCESTE. It does not matter.

PHILINTE. You will make a mistake.

ALCESTE. Be it so. I wish to see the end of it.

PHILINTE. But . . .

ALCESTE. I shall have the satisfaction of losing my suit.

PHILINTE. But after all . . .

ALCESTE. I shall see by this trial whether men have sufficient impudence, are wicked, villainous, and perverse enough to do me this injustice in the face of the whole world.

PHILINTE. What a strange fellow!

ALCESTE. I could wish, were it to cost me ever so much, that, for the fun of the thing, I lost my case.

PHILINTE. But people will really laugh at you, Alceste, if they hear you go on in this fashion.

ALCESTE. So much the worse for those who will.

PHILINTE. But this rectitude, which you exact so carefully in every case, this absolute integrity in which you intrench yourself, do you perceive it in the lady you love? As for me, I am astonished that, appearing to be at war with the whole human race, you yet, notwithstanding everything that can render it odious to you, have found aught to charm your eyes. And what surprises me still more, is the strange choice your heart has made. The sincere Éliante has a liking for you, the prude Arsinoé looks with favour upon you, yet your heart does not respond to their passion; whilst you wear the chains of Célimène, who sports with you, and whose coquettish humour and malicious wit seems to accord so well with the manner of the times. How comes it that, hating these things as mortally as you do, you endure so much of them in that lady? Are they no longer faults in so sweet a charmer? Do not you perceive them, or if you do, do you excuse them?

ALCESTE. Not so. The love I feel for this young widow does not make me blind to her faults, and, notwithstanding the great passion with which she has inspired me, I am the first to see, as well as to condemn, them. But for all this, do what I will, I confess my weakness, she has the art of pleasing me. In vain I see her faults; I may even blame them; in spite of all, she makes me love her. Her charms conquer everything, and, no doubt, my sincere love will purify her heart from the vices of our times.

PHILINTE. If you accomplish this, it will be no small task. Do you believe yourself beloved by her?

ALCESTE. Yes, certainly! I should not love her at all, did I not think so.

PHILINTE. But if her love for you is so apparent, how comes it that your rivals cause you so much uneasiness?

ALCESTE. It is because a heart, deeply smitten, claims all to itself; I come here only with the intention of telling her what, on this subject, my feelings dictate.

PHILINTE. Had I but to choose, her cousin Éliante would have all my love. Her heart, which values yours, is stable and sincere; and this more compatible choice would have suited you better.

ALCESTE. It is true; my good sense tells me so every day; but good sense does not always rule love.

PHILINTE. Well, I fear much for your affections; and the hope which you cherish may perhaps . . .

[Enter ORONTE.]

ORONTE [to ALCESTE]. I have been informed yonder that Éliante and Célimène have gone out to make some purchases. But as I heard that you were here, I came to tell you, most sincerely, that I have conceived the greatest regard for you, and that, for a long time, this regard has inspired me with the most ardent wish to be reckoned among your friends. Yes; I like to do homage to merit; and I am most anxious that a bond of friendship should unite us. I suppose that a zealous friend, and of my standing, is not altogether to be rejected. [*All this time ALCESTE has been musing, and seems*

not to be aware that ORONTE is addressing him. He looks up only when ORONTE says to him]—It is to you, if you please, that this speech is addressed.

ALCESTE. To me, sir?

ORONTE. To you. Is it in any way offensive to you?

ALCESTE. Not in the least. But my surprise is very great; and I did not expect that honour.

ORONTE. The regard in which I hold you ought not to astonish you, and you can claim it from the whole world.

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. Our whole kingdom contains nothing above the dazzling merit which people discover in you.

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. Yes; for my part, I prefer you to the most important in it.

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. May Heaven strike me dead, if I lie! And, to convince you, on this very spot, of my feelings, allow me, sir, to embrace you with all my heart, and to solicit a place in your friendship. Your hand, if you please. Will you promise me your friendship?

ALCESTE. Sir . . .

ORONTE. What! You refuse me?

ALCESTE. Sir, you do me too much honour; but friendship is a sacred thing, and to lavish it on every occasion is surely to profane it. Judgment and choice should preside at such a compact; we ought to know more of each other before engaging ourselves; and it may happen that our dispositions are such that we may both of us repent of our bargain.

ORONTE. Upon my word, that is wisely said; and I esteem you all the more for it. Let us therefore leave it to time to form such a pleasing bond; but, meanwhile I am entirely at your disposal. If you have any business at Court, every one knows how well I stand with the King; I have his private ear; and, upon my word, he treats me in everything with the utmost intimacy. In short, I am yours in every emergency; and, as you are a man of brilliant parts, and to inaugurate our charming amity, I come to read you a sonnet which I

made a little while ago, and to find out whether it be good enough for publicity.

ALCESTE. I am not fit, sir, to decide such a matter. You will therefore excuse me.

ORONTE. Why so?

ALCESTE. I have the failing of being a little more sincere in those things than is necessary.

ORONTE. The very thing I ask; and I should have reason to complain, if, in laying myself open to you that you might give me your frank opinion, you should deceive me, and disguise anything from me.

ALCESTE. If that be the case, sir, I am perfectly willing.

ORONTE. *Sonnet . . . It is a sonnet . . . Hope . . . It is to a lady who flattered my passion with some hope. Hope . . . They are not long, pompous verses, but mild, tender and melting little lines. [At every one of these interruptions he looks at ALCESTE.]*

ALCESTE. We shall see.

ORONTE. *Hope . . .* I do not know whether the style will strike you as sufficiently clear and easy, and whether you will approve of my choice of words.

ALCESTE. We shall soon see, sir.

ORONTE. Besides, you must know that I was only a quarter of an hour in composing it.

ALCESTE. Let us hear, sir; the time signifies nothing.

ORONTE [*reads*]. *Hope, it is true, oft gives relief,
Rocks for a while our tedious pain,
But what a poor advantage, Phillis,
When nought remains, and all is gone!*

PHILINTE. I am already charmed with this little bit.

ALCESTE [*softly to PHILINTE*]. What! Do you mean to tell me that you like this stuff?

ORONTE. *You once showed some complaisance,
But less would have sufficed,
You should not take that trouble
To give me nought but hope.*

PHILINTE. In what pretty terms these thoughts are put!

ALCESTE. How now! You vile flatterer, you praise this rubbish!

ORONTE. *If I must wait eternally,
My passion, driven to extremes,
Will fly to death.
Your tender cares cannot prevent this,
Fair Phillis, aye we're in despair,
When we must hope for ever.*

PHILINTE. The conclusion is pretty, amorous, admirable.

ALCESTE [*softly, and aside to PHILINTE*]. A plague on the conclusion! I wish you had concluded to break your nose, you poisoner to the devil!

PHILINTE. I never heard verses more skilfully turned.

ALCESTE [*softly, and aside*]. Zounds! . . .

ORONTE [*to PHILINTE*]. You flatter me; and you are under the impression perhaps . . .

PHILINTE. No, I am not flattering at all.

ALCESTE [*softly, and aside*]. What else are you doing, you wretch?

ORONTE [*to ALCESTE*]. But for you, you know our agreement. Speak to me, I pray, in all sincerity.

ALCESTE. These matters, sir, are always more or less delicate, and every one is fond of being praised for his wit. But I was saying one day to a certain person, who shall be nameless, when he showed me some of his verses, that a gentleman ought at all times to exercise a great control over that itch for writing which sometimes attacks him, and should keep a tight rein over the strong propensity which he has to display such amusements; and that, in the frequent anxiety to show his productions, he is frequently exposed to act a very foolish part.

ORONTE. Do you wish to convey to me by this that I am wrong in desiring . . .

ALCESTE. I do not say that exactly. But I told him that writing without warmth becomes a bore; that there needs no other weakness to disgrace a man; that, even if people, on the other hand, had many good qualities, we view them from their worst sides.

ORONTE. Do you find anything to object to in my sonnet?

ALCESTE. I do not say that. But, to keep him from writing, I set before his eyes how, in our days, that desire had spoiled a great many very worthy people.

ORONTE. Do I write badly? Am I like them in any way?

ALCESTE. I do not say that. But, in short, I said to him, "What pressing need is there for you to rhyme, and what the deuce drives you into print? If we can pardon the sending into the world of a badly-written book, it will only be in those unfortunate men who write for their livelihood. Believe me, resist your temptations, keep these effusions from the public, and do not, how much you may be asked, forfeit the reputation which you enjoy at Court of being a man of sense and a gentleman and take, from the hands of a greedy printer, the reputation of a ridiculous and wretched author." That is what I tried to make him understand.

ORONTE. This is all well and good, and I seem to understand you. But I should like to know what there is in my sonnet to . . .

ALCESTE. Candidly, you had better put it in your closet. You have been following bad models, and your expressions are not at all natural. Pray what is—*Rocks for a while our tedious pain?* And what, *When nought remains, and all is gone?* What, *You should not take that trouble to give me nought but hope?* And what, *Phyllis, aye we're in despair when we must hope for ever?* This figurative style, that people are so vain of, is beside all good taste and truth; it is only a play upon words, sheer affectation, and it is not thus that nature speaks. The wretched taste of the age is what I dislike in this. Our forefathers, unpolished as they were, had a much better one; and I value all that is admired now-a-days far less than an old song which I am going to repeat to you:

*"Had our great monarch granted me
His Paris large and fair;
And I straightway must quit for aye
The love of my true dear;*

*Then would I say, King Hal, I pray,
Take back your Paris fair,
I love much mo my dear, I trow,
I love much mo my dear."*

This versification is not rich, and the style is antiquated; but do you not see that it is far better than all those trumpery trifles against which good sense revolts, and that in this, passion speaks from the heart?

*"Had our great monarch granted me
His Paris large and fair;
And I straightway must quit for aye
The love of my true dear;
Then would I say, King Hal, I pray,
Take back your Paris fair,
I love much mo my dear, I trow,
I love much mo my dear."*

This is what a really loving heart would say. [*To PHILINTE, who is laughing.*] Yes, master wag, in spite of all your wit, I care more for this than for all the florid pomp and the tinsel which everybody is admiring now-a-days.

ORONTE. And I, I maintain that my verses are very good.

ALCESTE. Doubtless you have your reasons for thinking them so; but you will allow me to have mine, which, with your permission, will remain independent.

ORONTE. It is enough for me that others prize them.

ALCESTE. That is because they know how to dissemble, which I do not.

ORONTE. Do you really believe that you have such a great share of wit?

ALCESTE. If I praised your verses, I should have more.

ORONTE. I shall do very well without your approbation.

ALCESTE. You will have to do without it, if it be all the same.

ORONTE. I should like much to see you compose some on the same subject, just to have a sample of your style.

ALCESTE. I might, perchance, make some as bad; but I should take good care not to show them to any one.

ORONTE. You are mighty positive; and this great sufficiency . . .

ALCESTE. Pray, seek some one else to flatter you, and not me.

ORONTE. But, my little Sir, drop this haughty tone.

ALCESTE. In truth, my big Sir, I shall do as I like.

PHILINTE [*coming between them*]. Stop, gentlemen! That is carrying the matter too far. Cease, I pray.

ORONTE. Ah! I am wrong, I confess; and I leave the field to you. I am your servant, Sir, most heartily.

ALCESTE. And I, Sir, am your most humble servant.

[*Exit ORONTE.*]

PHILINTE. Well! you see. By being too sincere, you have got a nice affair on your hands. I saw that Oronte, in order to be flattered . . .

ALCESTE. Do not talk to me.

PHILINTE. But . . .

ALCESTE. No more society for me.

PHILINTE. Is it too much . . .

ALCESTE. Leave me alone.

PHILINTE. If I . . .

ALCESTE. Not another word.

PHILINTE. But what . . .

ALCESTE. I will hear no more.

PHILINTE. But . . .

ALCESTE. Again?

PHILINTE. People insult . . .

ALCESTE. Ah! Zounds! this is too much. Do not dog my steps.

PHILINTE. You are making fun of me; I shall not leave you.

ACT II

[*Enter ALCESTE and CÉLIMÈNE.*]

ALCESTE. Will you have me speak candidly to you, madam? Well, then, I am very much dissatisfied with your behaviour. I am very angry when I think of it; and I perceive that we shall have to break with each other. Yes; I should only de-

ceive you were I to speak otherwise. Sooner or later a rupture is unavoidable; and if I were to promise the contrary a thousand times, I should not be able to bear this any longer.

CÉLIMÈNE. Oh, I see! It is to quarrel with me, that you wished to conduct me home?

ALCESTE. I do not quarrel. But your disposition, madam, is too ready to give any first comer an entrance into your heart. Too many admirers beset you; and my temper cannot put up with that.

CÉLIMÈNE. Am I to blame for having too many admirers? Can I prevent people from thinking me amiable? And am I to take a stick to drive them away, when they endeavour by tender means to visit me?

ALCESTE. No, madam, there is no need for a stick, but only a heart less yielding and less melting at their love-tales. I am aware that your good looks accompany you, go where you will; but your reception retains those whom your eyes attract; and that gentleness, accorded to those who surrender their arms, finishes on their hearts the sway which your charms began. The too agreeable expectation which you offer them increases their assiduities towards you; and your complacency, a little less extended, would drive away the great crowd of so many admirers. But, tell me, at least, madam, by what good fortune Clitandre has the happiness of pleasing you so mightily? Upon what basis of merit and sublime virtue do you ground the honour of your regard for him? Is it by the long nail on his little finger that he has acquired the esteem which you display for him? Are you, like all the rest of the fashionable world, fascinated by the dazzling merit of his fair wig? Do his great rolls make you love him? Do his many ribbons charm you? Is it by the attraction of his great German breeches that he has conquered your heart, whilst at the same time he pretended to be your slave? Or have his manner of smiling, and his falsetto voice, found out the secret of moving your feelings?

CÉLIMÈNE. How unjustly you take umbrage at him! Do not you know why I countenance him; and that he has promised to interest all his friends in my lawsuit?

ALCESTE. Lose your lawsuit, madam, with patience, and do not countenance a rival whom I detest.

CÉLIMÈNE. But you are growing jealous of the whole world.

ALCESTE. It is because the whole world is so kindly received by you.

CÉLIMÈNE. That is the very thing to calm your frightened mind, because my good will is diffused over all: you would have more reason to be offended if you saw me entirely occupied with one.

ALCESTE. But as for me, whom you accuse of too much jealousy, what have I more than any of them, madam, pray?

CÉLIMÈNE. The happiness of knowing that you are beloved.

ALCESTE. And what grounds has my love-sick heart for believing it?

CÉLIMÈNE. I think that, as I have taken the trouble to tell you so, such an avowal ought to satisfy you.

ALCESTE. But who will assure me that you may not, at the same time, say as much to everybody else perhaps?

CÉLIMÈNE. Certainly, for a lover, this is a pretty amorous speech, and you make me out a very nice lady. Well! To remove such a suspicion, I retract this moment everything I have said; and no one but yourself shall for the future impose upon you. Will that satisfy you?

ALCESTE. Zounds! Why do I love you so! Ah! If ever I get heart-whole out of your hands, I shall bless Heaven for that rare good fortune. I make no secret of it; I do all that is possible to tear this unfortunate attachment from my heart; but hitherto my greatest efforts have been of no avail; and it is for my sins that I love you thus.

CÉLIMÈNE. It is very true that your affection for me is unequalled.

ALCESTE. As for that, I can challenge the whole world. My love for you cannot be conceived; and never, madam, has any man loved as I do.

CÉLIMÈNE. Your method, however, is entirely new, for you love people only to quarrel with them; it is in peevish ex-

pression alone that your feelings vent themselves; no one ever saw such a grumbling swain.

ALCESTE. But it lies with you alone to dissipate this ill-humour. For mercy's sake, let us make an end of all these bickerings, deal openly with each other, and try to put a stop . . .

[Enter BASQUE.]

CÉLIMÈNE. What is the matter?

BASQUE. Acaste is below.

CÉLIMÈNE. Very well! Bid him come up.

[Exit BASQUE.]

ALCESTE. What! Can one never have a little private conversation with you? You are always ready to receive company; and you cannot, for a single instant, make up your mind to be "not at home."

CÉLIMÈNE. Do you wish me to quarrel with Acaste?

ALCESTE. You have such regard for people, which I by no means like.

CÉLIMÈNE. He is a man never to forgive me, if he knew that his presence could annoy me.

ALCESTE. And what is that to you, to inconvenience yourself so . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. But, good Heaven! The amity of such as he is of importance; they are a kind of people who, I do not know how, have acquired the right to be heard at Court. They take their part in every conversation; they can do you no good, but they may do you harm; and, whatever support one may find elsewhere, it will never do to be on bad terms with these very noisy gentry.

ALCESTE. In short, whatever people may say or do, you always find reasons to bear with every one; and your very careful judgment . . .

[Enter BASQUE.]

BASQUE. Clitandre is here too, madam.

ALCESTE. Exactly so. [Wishes to go.]

CÉLIMÈNE. Where are you running to?

ALCESTE. I am going.

CÉLIMÈNE. Stay.

ALCESTE. For what?

CÉLIMÈNE. Stay.

ALCESTE. I cannot.

CÉLIMÈNE. I wish it.

ALCESTE. I will not. These conversations only weary me; and it is too bad of you to wish me to endure them.

CÉLIMÈNE. I wish it, I wish it.

ALCESTE. No, it is impossible.

CÉLIMÈNE. Very well, then; go, begone; you can do as you like.

[*Enter ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, and CLITANDRE.*]

ÉLIANTE [*to CÉLIMÈNE*]. Here are the two marquises coming up with us. Has anyone told you?

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes. [*To BASQUE.*] Place chairs for everyone. [*BASQUE places chairs, and goes out.*] [*To ALCESTE.*] You are not gone?

ALCESTE. No; but I am determined, madam, to have you make up your mind either for them or for me.

CÉLIMÈNE. Hold your tongue.

ALCESTE. This very day you shall explain yourself.

CÉLIMÈNE. You are losing your senses.

ALCESTE. Not at all. You shall declare yourself.

CÉLIMÈNE. Indeed!

ALCESTE. You must take your stand.

CÉLIMÈNE. You are jesting, I believe.

ALCESTE. Not so. But you must choose. I have been too patient.

CLITANDRE. Egad! I have just come from the Louvre, where Cléonte, at the levee, made himself very ridiculous. Has he not some friend who could charitably enlighten him upon his manners?

CÉLIMÈNE. Truth to say, he compromises himself very much in society; everywhere he carries himself with an air that is noticed at first sight, and when after a short absence you meet him again, he is still more absurd than ever.

ACASTE. Egad! Talk of absurd people, just now, one of the most tedious ones was annoying me. That reasoner,

Damon, kept me, if you please, for a full hour in the broiling sun, away from my Sedan chair.

CÉLIMÈNE. He is a strange talker, and one who always finds the means of telling you nothing with a great flow of words. There is no sense at all in his tittle-tattle, and all that we hear is but noise.

ÉLIANTE [*to PHILANTE*]. This beginning is not bad; and the conversation takes a sufficiently agreeable turn against our neighbours.

CLITANDRE. Timante, too, Madam, is another original.

CÉLIMÈNE. He is a complete mystery from top to toe, who throws upon you, in passing, a bewildered glance, and who, without having anything to do, is always busy. Whatever he utters is accompanied with grimaces; he quite oppresses people by his ceremonies. To interrupt a conversation, he has always a secret to whisper to you, and that secret turns out to be nothing. Of the merest molehill he makes a mountain, and whispers everything in your ear, even to a "good-day."

ACASTE. And Geralde, Madam?

CÉLIMÈNE. That tiresome story-teller! He never comes down from his nobleman's pedestal; he continually mixes with the best society, and never quotes any one of minor rank than a Duke, Prince, or Princess. Rank is his hobby, and his conversation is of nothing but horses, carriages, and dogs. He *thee's* and *thou's* persons of the highest standing, and the word Sir is quite obsolete with him.

CLITANDRE. It is said that he is on the best of terms with Bélise.

CÉLIMÈNE. Poor silly woman, and the dreariest company! When she comes to visit me, I suffer from martyrdom; one has to rack one's brain perpetually to find out what to say to her; and the impossibility of her expressing her thoughts allows the conversation to drop every minute. In vain you try to overcome her stupid silence by the assistance of the most commonplace topics; even the fine weather, the rain, the heat and the cold are subjects, which, with her, are soon exhausted. Yet for all that, her calls, unbearable enough, are prolonged to an insufferable length; and you may consult

the clock, or yawn twenty times, but she stirs no more than a log of wood.

ACASTE. What think you of Adraste?

CÉLIMÈNE. Oh! What excessive pride! He is a man positively puffed out with conceit. His self-importance is never satisfied with the Court, against which he inveighs daily; and whenever an office, a place, or a living is bestowed on another, he is sure to think himself unjustly treated.

CLITANDRE. But young Cléon, whom the most respectable people go to see, what say you of him?

CÉLIMÈNE. That it is to his cook he owes his distinction, and to his table that people pay visits.

ÉLIANTE. He takes pains to provide the most dainty dishes.

CÉLIMÈNE. True; but I should be very glad if he would not dish up himself. His foolish person is a very bad dish, which, to my thinking, spoils every entertainment he gives.

PHILINTE. His uncle Damis is very much esteemed; what say you to him, Madam?

CÉLIMÈNE. He is one of my friends.

PHILINTE. I think him a perfect gentleman, and sensible enough.

CÉLIMÈNE. True; but he pretends to too much wit, which annoys me. He is always upon stilts, and, in all his conversations, one sees him labouring to say smart things. Since he took it into his head to be clever, he is so difficult to please that nothing suits his taste. He must needs find mistakes in everything that one writes, and thinks that to bestow praise does not become a wit, that to find fault shows learning, that only fools admire and laugh, and that, by not approving of anything in the works of our time, he is superior to all other people. Even in conversations he finds something to cavil at, the subjects are too trivial for his condescension; and, with arms crossed on his breast, he looks down from the height of his intellect with pity on what everyone says.

ACASTE. Drat it! His very picture.

CLITANDRE [to CÉLIMÈNE]. You have an admirable knack of portraying people to the life.

ALCESTE. Capital, go on, my fine courtly friends. You

spare no one, and everyone will have his turn. Nevertheless, let but any one of those persons appear, and we shall see you rush to meet him, offer him your hand, and, with a flattering kiss, give weight to your protestations of being his servant.

CLITANDRE. Why this to us? If what is said offends you, the reproach must be addressed to this lady.

ALCESTE. No, gadzooks! It concerns you; for your assenting smiles draw from her wit all these slanderous remarks. Her satirical vein is incessantly recruited by the culpable incense of your flattery; and her mind would find fewer charms in raillery, if she discovered that no one applauded her. Thus it is that to flatterers we ought everywhere to impute the vices which are sown among mankind.

PHILINTE. But why do you take so great an interest in those people, for you would condemn the very things that are blamed in them?

CÉLIMÈNE. And is not this gentleman bound to contradict? Would you have him subscribe to the general opinion; and must he not everywhere display the spirit of contradiction with which Heaven has endowed him? Other people's sentiments can never please him. He always supports a contrary idea, and he would think himself too much of the common herd, were he observed to be of any one's opinion but his own. The honour of gainsaying has so many charms for him that he very often takes up the cudgels against himself; he combats his own sentiments as soon as he hears them from other folks' lips.

ALCESTE. In short, madam, the laughs are on your side; and you may launch your satire against me.

PHILINTE. But it is very true, too, that you always take up arms against everything that is said; and, that your avowed spleen cannot bear people to be praised or blamed.

ALCESTE. 'Sdeath! spleen against mankind is always seasonable, because they are never in the right, and I see that, in all their dealings, they either praise impertinently, or censure rashly.

CÉLIMÈNE. But . . .

ALCESTE. No, Madam, no, though I were to die for it, you have pastimes which I cannot tolerate; and people are very wrong to nourish in your heart this great attachment to the very faults which they blame in you.

CLITANDRE. As for myself, I do not know; but I openly acknowledge that hitherto I have thought this lady faultless.

ACASTE. I see that she is endowed with charms and attractions; but the faults which she has have not struck me.

ALCESTE. So much the more have they struck me; and far from appearing blind, she knows that I take care to reproach her with them. The more we love any one, the less we ought to flatter her. True love shows itself by overlooking nothing; and, were I a lady, I should banish all those mean-spirited lovers who submit to all my sentiments and whose mild complacencies every moment offer up incense to my vagaries.

CÉLIMÈNE. In short, if hearts were ruled by you, we ought, to love well, to relinquish all tenderness and make it the highest aim of perfect attachment to rail heartily at the persons we love.

ELIANTE. Love, generally speaking, is little apt to put up with these decrees, and lovers are always observed to extol their choice. Their passion never sees aught to blame in it, and in the beloved all things become loveable. They think their faults perfections, and invent sweet terms to call them by. The pale one vies with the jessamine in fairness; another, dark enough to frighten people, becomes an adorable brunette; the lean one has a good shape and is lithe; the stout one has a portly and majestic bearing; the slattern, who has few charms, passes under the name of a careless beauty; the giantess seems a very goddess in their sight; the dwarf is an epitome of all the wonders of Heaven; the proud one has a soul worthy of a diadem; the artful brims with wit; the silly one is very good-natured; the chatterbox is good-tempered; and the silent one modest and reticent. Thus a passionate swain loves even the very faults of her of whom he is enamoured.

ALCESTE. And I maintain that . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Let us drop the subject, and take a turn or two in the gallery. What! Are you going, gentlemen?

CLITANDRE *and* ACASTE. No, no, Madam.

ALCESTE. The fear of their departure troubles you very much. Go when you like, gentlemen; but I tell you beforehand that I shall not leave until you leave.

ACASTE. Unless it inconveniences this lady, I have nothing to call me elsewhere the whole day.

CLITANDRE. I, provided I am present when the King retires, have no other matter to call me away.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to* ALCESTE]. You only joke, I fancy.

ALCESTE. Not at all. We shall soon see whether it is me of whom you wish to get rid.

[*Enter* BASQUE.]

BASQUE [*to* ALCESTE]. There is a man down stairs, sir, who wishes to speak to you on business which cannot be postponed.

ALCESTE. Tell him that I have no such urgent business.

BASQUE. He wears a jacket with large plaited skirts embroidered with gold.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to* ALCESTE]. Go and see who it is, or else let him come in.

[*Exit* BASQUE.]

[*Enter a Guard of the Maréchaussée.*]

ALCESTE [*going to meet the guard*]. What may be your pleasure? Come in, sir.

GUARD. I would have a few words privately with you, sir.

ALCESTE. You may speak aloud, sir, so as to let me know.

GUARD. The Marshals of France, whose commands I bear, hereby summon you to appear before them immediately, sir.

ALCESTE. Who? Me, sir?

GUARD. You, sir!

ALCESTE. And for what?

PHILINTE [*to* ALCESTE]. It is this ridiculous affair between you and Oronte.

CÉLIMÈNE [*to* PHILINTE]. What do you mean?

PHILINTE. Oronte and he have been insulting each other

just now about some trifling verses which he did not like; and the Marshals wish to nip the affair in the bud.

ALCESTE. Well, I shall never basely submit.

PHILINTE. But you must obey the summons: come, get ready.

ALCESTE. How will they settle this between us? Will the edict of these gentlemen oblige me to approve of the verses which are the cause of our quarrel? I will not retract what I have said; I think them abominable.

PHILINTE. But with a little milder tone . . .

ALCESTE. I will not abate one jot; the verses are execrable.

PHILINTE. You ought to show a more accommodating spirit. Come along.

ALCESTE. I shall go, but nothing shall induce me to retract.

PHILINTE. Go and show yourself.

ALCESTE. Unless an express order from the King himself commands me to approve of the verses which cause all this trouble, I shall ever maintain, egad, that they are bad, and that a fellow deserves hanging for making them. [*To CLITANDRE and ACASTE who are laughing.*] Hang it! gentlemen, I did not think I was so amusing.

CÉLIMÈNE. Go quickly whither you are wanted.

ALCESTE. I am going, Madam, but shall come back here to finish our discussion.

ACT III

[*Enter CLITANDRE and ACASTE.*]

CLITANDRE. My dear marquis, you appear mightily pleased with yourself; everything amuses you, and nothing discomposes you. But really and truly, think you, without flattering yourself, that you have good reasons for appearing so joyful?

ACASTE. Egad, I do not find, on looking at myself, any matter to be sorrowful about. I am wealthy, I am young, and am descended from a family which, with some appear-

ance of truth, may be called noble; and I think that, by the rank which my lineage confers upon me, there are very few offices to which I might not aspire. As for courage, which we ought especially to value, it is well known—this without vanity—that I do not lack it; and people have seen me carry on an affair of honour in a manner sufficiently vigorous and brisk. As for wit, I have some, no doubt; and as for good taste, I judge and reason upon everything without study; at “first nights,” of which I am very fond, I take my place as a critic upon the stage, to give my opinion as a judge, to applaud, and to point out the best passages by repeated bravoës, I carry myself well, and am good-looking, have particularly fine teeth and a good figure. I believe, without flattering myself, that, as for dressing in good taste, very few will dispute the palm with me. I find myself treated with every possible consideration, very much beloved by the fair sex; and I stand very well with the King. With all that, I think, dear marquis, that one might be satisfied with oneself anywhere.

CLITANDRE. True. But, finding so many easy conquests elsewhere, why come you here to utter fruitless sighs?

ACASTE. I? Zounds! I have neither the wish nor the disposition to put up with the indifference of any woman. I leave it to awkward and ordinary people to burn constantly for cruel fair maidens, to languish at their feet, and to bear with their severities, to invoke the aid of sighs and tears, and to endeavour, by long and persistent assiduities, to obtain what is denied to their little merit. Men of my stamp, marquis, are not made to love on trust and be at all the expenses themselves. Be the merit of the fair ever so great, I think, thank Heaven, that we have our value as well as they; that it is not reasonable to enthrall a heart like mine without its costing them anything; and that, to weigh everything in a just scale, the advances should be, at least, reciprocal.

CLITANDRE. Then you think that you are right enough here, marquis?

ACASTE. I have some reason, marquis, to think so.

CLITANDRE. Believe me, divest yourself of this great mis-

take: you flatter yourself, dear friend, and are altogether self-deceived.

ACASTE. It is true. I flatter myself, and am, in fact, altogether, self-deceived.

CLITANDRE. But what causes you to judge your happiness to be complete?

ACASTE. I flatter myself.

CLITANDRE. Upon what do you ground your belief?

ACASTE. I am altogether self-deceived.

CLITANDRE. Have you any sure proofs?

ACASTE. I am mistaken, I tell you.

CLITANDRE. Has Célimène made you any secret avowal of her inclinations?

ACASTE. No, I am very badly treated by her.

CLITANDRE. Answer me, I pray.

ACASTE. I meet with nothing but rebuffs.

CLITANDRE. A truce to your raillery; and tell me what hope she has held out to you.

ACASTE. I am the rejected, and you are the lucky one. She has a great aversion to me, and one of these days I shall have to hang myself.

CLITANDRE. Nonsense. Shall we two, marquis, to adjust our love affairs, make a compact together? Whenever one of us shall be able to show a certain proof of having the greater share in Célimène's heart, the other shall leave the field free to the supposed conqueror, and by that means rid him of an obstinate rival.

ACASTE. Egad! You please me with these words, and I agree to that from the bottom of my heart. But hush.

[Enter CÉLIMÈNE.]

CÉLIMÈNE. What! here still?

CLITANDRE. Love, madam, detains us.

CÉLIMÈNE. I hear a carriage below. Do you know whose it is?

CLITANDRE. No.

[Enter BASQUE.]

BASQUE. Arsinoé, Madam, is coming up to see you.

CÉLIMÈNE. What does the woman want with me?

BASQUE. Éliante is down stairs talking to her.

CÉLIMÈNE. What is she thinking about, and what brings her here?

ACASTE. She has everywhere the reputation of being a consummate prude, and her fervent zeal . . .

[*Exit BASQUE.*]

CÉLIMÈNE. Psha, downright humbug. In her inmost soul she is as worldly as any; and her every nerve is strained to hook some one, without being successful, however. She can only look with envious eyes on the accepted lovers of others; and in her wretched condition, forsaken by all, she is forever railing against the blindness of the age. She endeavors to hide the dreadful isolation of her home under a false cloak of prudishness; and to save the credit of her feeble charms, she brands as criminal the power which they lack. Yet a swain would not come at all amiss to the lady; and she has even a tender hankering after Alceste. Every attention that he pays me she looks upon as a theft committed by me and as an insult to her attractions; and her jealous spite, which she can hardly hide, breaks out against me at every opportunity, and in an underhand manner. In short, I never saw anything so stupid. She is impertinent to the last degree . . .

[*Enter BASQUE, showing in ARSINOÉ.*]

CÉLIMÈNE. Ah! what happy chance brings you here, Madam? I was really growing uneasy about you.

[*Exit BASQUE.*]

ARSINOÉ. I have come to give you some advice as a matter of duty.

CÉLIMÈNE. How very glad I am to see you!

[*Exeunt CLITANDRE and ACASTE, laughing.*]

ARSINOÉ. They could not have left at a more convenient time.

CÉLIMÈNE. Shall we sit down?

ARSINOÉ. It is not necessary. Friendship, Madam, must especially show itself in matters which may be of consequence to us; and as there are none of greater importance than honour and decorum, I come to prove to you, by an advice which closely touches your reputation, the friendship which I feel for

you. Yesterday I was with some people of rare virtue, where the conversation turned upon you; and there, your conduct, which is causing some stir, was unfortunately, Madam, far from being commended. That crowd of people, whose visits you permit, your gallantry and the noise it makes, were criticised rather more freely and more severely than I could have wished. You can easily imagine whose part I took. I did all I could to defend you. I exonerated you, and vouched for the purity of your heart, and the honesty of your intentions. But you know there are things in life, which one cannot well defend, although one may have the greatest wish to do so; and I was at last obliged to confess that the way in which you lived did you some harm; that, in the eyes of the world, it had a doubtful look; that there was no story so ill-natured as not to be everywhere told about it; and that, if you liked, your behaviour might give less cause for censure. Not that I believe that decency is in any way outraged. Heaven forbid that I should harbour such a thought! But the world is very ready to give credit to the faintest shadow of a crime, and it is not enough to live blameless one's self. Madam, I believe you to be too sensible not to take in good part this useful counsel, and not to ascribe it only to the inner promptings of an affection that feels an interest in your welfare.

CÉLIMÈNE. Madam, I have a great many thanks to return you. Such counsel lays me under an obligation; and, far from taking it amiss, I intend this very moment to repay the favour by giving you an advice which also touches your reputation closely; and as I see you prove yourself my friend by acquainting me with the stories that are current of me, I shall follow so nice an example by informing you what is said of you. In a house the other day, where I paid a visit. I met some people of exemplary merit, who, while talking of the proper duties of a well spent life, turned the topic of the conversation upon you, Madam. There your prudishness and your too fervent zeal were not at all cited as a good example. This affectation of a grave demeanour, your eternal conversations on wisdom and honor, your mincings and mouthings

at the slightest shadows of indecency, which an innocent though ambiguous word may convey, that lofty esteem in which you hold yourself, and those pitying glances which you cast upon all, your frequent lectures and your acrid censures on things which are pure and harmless; all this, if I may speak frankly to you, Madam, was blamed unanimously. What is the good, said they, of this modest mien and this prudent exterior, which is belied by all the rest? She says her prayers with the utmost exactness; but she beats her servants and pays them no wages. She displays great fervour in every place of devotion; but she paints and wishes to appear handsome. She covers the nudities in her pictures; but loves the reality. As for me, I undertook your defence against everyone, and positively assured them that it was nothing but scandal; but the general opinion went against me, as they came to the conclusion that you would do well to concern yourself less about the actions of others, and take a little more pains with your own; that one ought to look a long time at one's self before thinking of condemning other people; that when we wish to correct others, we ought to add the weight of a blameless life; and that even then, it would be better to leave it to those whom Heaven has ordained for the task. Madam, I also believe you to be too sensible not to take in good part this useful counsel, and not to ascribe it only to the inner promptings of an affection that feels an interest in your welfare.

ARSINOË. To whatever we may be exposed when we reprove, I did not expect this retort, Madam, and, by its very sting, I see how my sincere advice has hurt your feelings.

CÉLIMÈNE. On the contrary, Madam; and, if we were reasonable, these mutual counsels would become customary. If honestly made use of, they would to a great extent destroy the excellent opinion people have of themselves. It depends entirely on you whether we shall continue this trustworthy practice with equal zeal, and whether we shall take great care to tell each other, between ourselves, what we hear, you of me, I of you.

ARSINOË. Ah! Madam, I can hear nothing said of you. It is in me that people find so much to reprove.

CÉLIMÈNE. Madam, it is easy, I believe, to blame or praise everything; and everyone may be right, according to his age and taste. There is a time for gallantry, there is one, also, for prudishness. One may out of policy take to it, when youthful attractions have faded away. It sometimes serves to hide vexatious ravages of time. I do not say that I shall not follow your example, one of these days. Those things come with old age; but twenty, as everyone well knows, is not an age to play the prude.

ARSINOË. You certainly pride yourself upon a very small advantage, and you boast terribly of your age. Whatever difference there may be between your years and mine, there is no occasion to make such a tremendous fuss about it; and I am at a loss to know, Madam, why you should become so angry, and what makes you goad me in this manner.

CÉLIMÈNE. And I, Madam, am at an equal loss to know why one hears you inveigh so bitterly against me everywhere. Must I always suffer for your vexations? Can I help it if people refuse to pay you any attentions? If men will fall in love with me, and will persist in offering me each day those attentions of which your heart would wish to see me deprived, I cannot alter it, and it is not my fault. I leave you the field free, and do not prevent you from having charms to attract people.

ARSINOË. Alas! And do you think that I would trouble myself about this crowd of lovers of which you are so vain, and that it is not very easy to judge at what price they may be attracted now-a-days? Do you wish to make it be believed, that, judging by what is going on, your merit alone attracts this crowd; that their affection for you is strictly honest, and that it is for nothing but your virtue that they all pay you their court? People are not blinded by those empty pretences; the world is not duped in that way; and I see many ladies who are capable of inspiring a tender feeling, yet who do not succeed in attracting a crowd of beaux: from that fact we may draw our conclusion that those con-

quests are not altogether made without some great advances; that no one cares to sigh for us, for our handsome looks only; and that the attentions bestowed on us are generally dearly bought. Do not, therefore, pull yourself up with vain-glory about the trifling advantages of a poor victory; and moderate slightly the pride on your good looks, instead of looking down upon people on account of them. If I were at all envious about your conquests, I dare say that I might manage like other people; be under no restraint, and thus show plainly that one may have lovers when one wishes for them.

CÉLIMÈNE. Do have some then, Madam, and let us see you try it; endeavour to please by this extraordinary secret; and without . . .

ARSINOÉ. Let us break off this conversation, madam, it might excite too much both your temper and mine; and I would have already taken my leave, had I not been obliged to wait for my carriage.

CÉLIMÈNE. Please stay as long as you like, and do not hurry yourself on that account, madam. But instead of wearying you any longer with my presence, I am going to give you some more pleasant company. This gentleman, who comes very opportunely, will better supply my place in entertaining you.

[*Enter ALCESTE.*]

CÉLIMÈNE. Alceste, I have to write a few lines which I cannot well delay. Please to stay with this lady; she will all the more easily excuse my rudeness. [*Exit CÉLIMÈNE.*]

ARSINOÉ. You see, I am left here to entertain you, until my coach comes round. She could have devised no more charming treat for me than such a conversation. Indeed, people of exceptional merit attract the esteem and love of every one; and yours has undoubtedly some secret charm which makes me feel interested in all your doings. I could wish that the Court with a real regard to your merits would do more justice to your deserts. You have reason to complain; and it vexes me to see that day by day nothing is done for you.

ALCESTE. For me, Madam? And by what right could I

pretend to anything? What service have I rendered to the State? Pray, what have I done, so brilliant in itself, to complain of the Court doing nothing for me?

ARSINOÉ. Not everyone whom the State delights to honour has rendered signal services; there must be an opportunity as well as the power; and the abilities which you allow us to perceive ought . . .

ALCESTE. For Heaven's sake, let us have no more of my abilities, I pray. What would you have the Court do? It would have enough to do, and have its hands full, to discover the merits of people.

ARSINOÉ. Sterling merit discovers itself. A great deal is made of yours in certain places; and let me tell you that, not later than yesterday, you were highly spoken of in two distinguished circles, by people of very great standing.

ALCESTE. As for that, Madam, everyone is praised now-a-days, and very little discrimination is shown in our times. Everything is equally endowed with great merit, so that it is no longer an honour to be lauded. Praises abound, they throw them at one's head; and even my valet is put in the gazette.

ARSINOÉ. As for me, I could wish that, to bring yourself into greater notice, some place at Court might tempt you. If you will only give me a hint that you seriously think about it, a great many engines might be set in motion to serve you; and I know some people whom I could employ for you and who would manage the matter smoothly enough.

ALCESTE. And what should I do when I got there, Madam? My disposition rather prompts me to keep away from it. Heaven, when ushering me into the world, did not give me a mind suited for the atmosphere of a Court. I have not the qualifications necessary for success, nor for making my fortune there. To be open and candid is my chief talent; I possess not the art of deceiving people in conversation; and he who has the gift of concealing his thoughts, ought not to stay long in those places. When not at Court, one has not, doubtless, that standing, and the advantage of those honourable titles which it bestows now-a-days; but, on the other

hand, one has not the vexation of playing the silly fool. One has not to bear a thousand galling rebuffs; one is not, as it were, forced to praise the verses of Mister so-and-so, to laud Madam such and such, and to put up with the whims of some ingenious marquis.

ARSINOÉ. Since you wish it, let us drop the subject of the Court: but I cannot help grieving for your amours; and, to tell you my opinions candidly on that head, I could heartily wish your affections better bestowed. You certainly deserve a much happier fate, for she who has fascinated you is unworthy of you.

ALCESTE. But in saying so, Madam, remember, I pray, that this lady is your friend.

ARSINOÉ. True. But really my conscience revolts at the thought of suffering any longer the wrong that is done to you. The position in which I see you afflicts my very soul, and I caution you that your affections are betrayed.

ALCESTE. This is certainly showing me a deal of good feeling, Madam, and such information is very welcome to a lover.

ARSINOÉ. Yes, for all Célimène is my friend, I do not hesitate to call her unworthy of possessing the heart of a man of honour; and hers only pretends to respond to yours.

ALCESTE. That is very possible, Madam, one cannot look into the heart: but your charitable feelings might well have refrained from awakening such a suspicion as mine.

ARSINOÉ. Nothing is easier than to say no more about it, if you do not wish to be undeceived.

ALCESTE. Just so. But whatever may be openly said on this subject is not half so annoying as hints thrown out; and I for one would prefer to be plainly told that only which could be clearly proved.

ARSINOÉ. Very well! That is sufficient; I can fully enlighten you upon the subject. I will have you believe nothing but what your own eyes see. Only have the kindness to escort me as far as my house and I will give you undeniable proof of the faithlessness of your fair one's heart; if, after

that, you can find charms in anyone else, we will perhaps find you some consolation.

ACT IV

[*Enter ÉLIANTE and PHILINTE.*]

PHILINTE. No, never have I seen so obstinate a mind, nor a reconciliation more difficult to effect. In vain was Alceste tried on all sides; he would still maintain his opinion: and never, I believe, has a more curious dispute engaged the attention of those gentlemen. "No, gentlemen," exclaimed he, "I will not retract, and I shall agree with you on every point, except on this one. At what is Oronte offended? And with what does he reproach me? Does it reflect upon his honour that he cannot write well? What is my opinion to him, which he has altogether wrongly construed? One may be a perfect gentleman, and write bad verses; those things have nothing to do with honour. I take him to be a gallant man in every way; a man of standing, of merit, and courage, anything you like, but he is a wretched author. I shall praise, if you wish, his mode of living, his lavishness, his skill in riding, in fencing, in dancing; but as to praising his verses, I am his humble servant; and if one has not the gift of composing better, one ought to leave off rhyming altogether, unless condemned to it on forfeit of one's life." In short, all the modification they could with difficulty obtain from him, was to say, in what he thought a much gentler tone, "I am sorry, Sir, to be so difficult to please; and out of regard to you, I could wish, with all my heart, to have found your sonnet a little better." And they compelled them to settle this dispute quickly with an embrace.

ÉLIANTE. He is very eccentric in his doings; but I must confess that I think a great deal of him; and the candour upon which he prides himself has something noble and heroic in it. It is a rare virtue now-a-days, and I, for one, should not be sorry to meet with it everywhere.

PHILINTE. As for me, the more I see of him, the more I am amazed at that passion to which his whole heart is given up.

I cannot conceive how, with a disposition like his, he has taken it into his head to love at all; and still less can I understand how your cousin happens to be the person to whom his feelings are inclined.

ÉLIANTE. That shows that love is not always produced by compatibility of temper; and in this case, all the pretty theories of gentle sympathies are belied.

PHILINTE. But do you think him beloved in return, to judge from what we see?

ÉLIANTE. That is a point not easily decided. How can we judge whether it be true she loves? Her own heart is not so very sure of what it feels. It sometimes loves, without being quite aware of it, and at other times thinks it does, without the least grounds.

PHILINTE. I think that our friend will have more trouble with this cousin of yours than he imagines; and to tell you the truth, if he were of my mind, he would bestow his affections elsewhere; and by a better choice, we should see him, Madam, profit by the kind feelings which your heart evinces for him.

ÉLIANTE. As for me, I do not mince matters, and I think that in such cases we ought to act with sincerity. I do not run counter to his tender feelings; on the contrary, I feel interested in them; and, if it depended only on me, I would unite him to the object of his love. But if, as it may happen in love affairs, his affections should receive a check, and if Célimène should respond to the love of any one else, I could easily be prevailed upon to listen to his addresses, and I should have no repugnance whatever to them on account of their rebuff elsewhere.

PHILINTE. Nor do I, from my side, oppose myself, Madam, to the tender feelings which you entertain for him; and he himself, if he wished, could inform you what I have taken care to say to him on that score. But if, by the union of those two, you should be prevented from accepting his attentions, all mine would endeavour to gain that great favour which your kind feelings offer to him. I should be only too happy, Madam, to have them transferred to me, if his heart could not respond to yours.

ÉLIANTE. You are in the humour to jest, Philinte.

PHILINTE. Not so, Madam, I am speaking my inmost feelings. I only wait the opportune moment to offer myself openly and am wishing most anxiously to hurry its advent.

[*Enter ALCESTE*]

ALCESTE. Ah, Madam! Obtain me justice for an offence which triumphs over all my constancy.

ÉLIANTE. What ails you? What disturbs you?

ALCESTE. This much ails me, that it is death to me to think of it; and the upheaving of all creation would less overwhelm me than this accident. It is all over with me . . . My love . . . I cannot speak.

ÉLIANTE. Just endeavour to be composed.

ALCESTE. Oh, just Heaven; can the odious vices of the basest minds be joined to such beauty?

ÉLIANTE. But, once more, what can have . . .

ALCESTE. Alas! All is ruined! I am! I am betrayed! I am stricken to death. Célimène . . . would you credit it! Célimène deceives me and is faithless.

ÉLIANTE. Have you just grounds for believing so?

PHILINTE. Perhaps it is a suspicion, rashly conceived; and your jealous temper often harbours fancies . . .

ALCESTE. Ah! 'Sdeath, please to mind your own business, Sir. [*To ÉLIANTE.*] Her treachery is but too certain, for I have in my pocket a letter in her own handwriting. Yes, Madam, a letter, intended for Oronte, has placed before my eyes my disgrace and her shame; Oronte, whose addresses I believed she avoided, and whom, of all my rivals, I feared the least.

PHILINTE. A letter may deceive by appearance, and is sometimes not so culpable as may be thought.

ALCESTE. Once more, sir, leave me alone, if you please, and trouble yourself only about your own concerns.

ÉLIANTE. You should moderate your passion; and the insult . . .

ALCESTE. You must be left to do that Madam; it is to you that my heart has recourse to-day to free itself from this

goadings pain. Avenge me on an ungrateful and perfidious relative who basely deceives such constant tenderness. Avenge me for an act that ought to fill you with horror.

ÉLIANTE. I avenge you? How?

ALCESTE. By accepting my heart. Take it, Madam, instead of the false one; it is in this way that I can avenge myself upon her; and I shall punish her by the sincere attachment, and the profound love, the respectful cares, the eager devotions, the ceaseless attentions which this heart will henceforth offer up at your shrine.

ÉLIANTE. I certainly sympathize with you in your sufferings and do not despise your proffered heart; but the wrong done may not be so great as you think, and you might wish to forego this desire for revenge. When the injury proceeds from a beloved object, we form many designs which we never execute; we may find as powerful a reason as we like to break off the connection, the guilty charmer is soon again innocent; all the harm we wish her quickly vanishes, and we know what a lover's anger means.

ALCESTE. No, no, Madam, no. The offence is too cruel; there will be no relenting, and I have done with her. Nothing shall change the resolution I have taken, and I should hate myself for ever loving her again. Here she comes. My anger increases at her approach. I shall taunt her with her black guilt, completely put her to the blush, and, after that, bring you a heart wholly freed from her deceitful attractions.

[*Exeunt ÉLIANTE and PHILINTE.*]

[*Enter CÉLIMÈNE.*]

ALCESTE [*aside*]. Grant, Heaven, that I may control my temper.

CÉLIMÈNE [*aside*]. Ah! [*To ALCESTE.*] What is all this trouble I see you in, and what means those long-drawn sighs, and those black looks which you cast at me?

ALCESTE. That all the wickedness of which a heart is capable is not to be compared to your perfidy; that neither fate, hell, nor Heaven in its wrath, ever produced anything so wicked as you are.

CÉLIMÈNE. These are certainly pretty compliments, which I admire very much.

ALCESTE. Do not jest. This is no time for laughing. Blush rather, you have cause to do so; and I have undeniable proofs of your treachery. This is what the agitations of my mind prognosticated; it was not without cause that my love took alarm; by these frequent suspicions, which were hateful to you, I was trying to discover the misfortune which my eyes have beheld; and in spite of all your care and your skill in dissembling, my star foretold me what I had to fear. But do not imagine that I will bear unavenged this slight of being insulted. I know that we have no command over our inclinations, that love will everywhere spring up spontaneously, that there is no entering a heart by force, and that every soul is free to name its conqueror: I should thus have no reason to complain if you had spoken to me without dissembling, and rejected my advances from the very beginning; my heart would then have been justified in blaming fortune alone. But to see my love encouraged by a deceitful avowal on your part is an action so treacherous and perfidious that it cannot meet with too great a punishment and I can allow my resentment to do anything. Yes, yes; after such an outrage, fear everything; I am no longer myself, I am mad with rage. My senses, struck by the deadly blow with which you kill me, are no longer governed by reason; I give way to the outbursts of a just wrath and am no longer responsible for what I may do.

CÉLIMÈNE. Whence comes, I pray, such a passion? Speak! Have you lost your senses?

ALCESTE. Yes, yes, I lost when, to my misfortune, I beheld you, and thus took the poison which kills me, and when I thought to meet with some sincerity in those treacherous charms that bewitched me.

CÉLIMÈNE. Of what treachery have you to complain?

ALCESTE. Ah! How double-faced she is! How well she knows how to dissemble! But I am fully prepared with the means of driving her to extremities. Cast your eyes here and

recognize your writing. This picked-up note is sufficient to confound you, and such proof cannot easily be refuted.

CÉLIMÈNE. And this is the cause of your perturbation of spirits?

ALCESTE. You do not blush on beholding this writing!

CÉLIMÈNE. And why should I blush?

ALCESTE. What! You add boldness to craft! Will you disown this note because it bears no name?

CÉLIMÈNE. Why should I disown it, since I wrote it.

ALCESTE. And you can look at it without becoming confused at the crime of which its style accuses you!

CÉLIMÈNE. You are, in truth, a very eccentric man.

ALCESTE. What! you thus out-brave this convincing proof! And the contents so full of tenderness for Oronte, need have nothing in them to outrage me, or to shame you?

CÉLIMÈNE. Oronte! Who told you that this letter is for him?

ALCESTE. The people who put it into my hands this day. But I will even suppose that it is for some one else. Has my heart any less cause to complain of yours? Will you, in fact, be less guilty toward me?

CÉLIMÈNE. But if it is a woman to whom this letter is addressed, how can it hurt you, or what is there culpable in it?

ALCESTE. Hem! The prevarication is ingenious, and the excuse excellent. I must own that I did not expect this turn; and nothing but that was wanting to convince me. Do you dare to have recourse to such palpable tricks? Do you think people entirely destitute of common sense? Come, let us see a little by what subterfuge, with what air, you will support so palpable a falsehood; and how you can apply to a woman every word of this note which evinces so much tenderness! Reconcile, if you can, to hide your deceit, what I am about to read. . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. It does not suit me to do so. I think it ridiculous that you should take so much upon yourself, and tell me to my face what you have the daring to say to me!

ALCESTE. No, no, without flying into a rage, take a little trouble to explain these terms.

CÉLIMÈNE. No, I shall do nothing of the kind, and it matters very little to me what you think upon the subject.

ALCESTE. I pray you, show me, and I shall be satisfied, if this letter can be explained as meant for a woman.

CÉLIMÈNE. Not at all. It is for Oronte; and I will have you believe it. I accept all his attentions gladly; I admire what he says, I like him, and I shall agree to whatever you please. Do as you like, and act as you think proper; let nothing hinder you and do not harass me any longer.

ALCESTE [*aside*]. Heavens! can anything more cruel be conceived, and was ever heart treated like mine? What! I am justly angry with her, I come to complain, and I am quarreled with instead! My grief and my suspicions are excited to the utmost, I am allowed to believe everything, she boasts of everything; and yet, my heart is still sufficiently mean not to be able to break the bonds that hold it fast, and not to arm itself with a generous contempt for the ungrateful object of which it is too much enamoured. [*To CÉLIMÈNE*]. Perfidious woman, you know well how to take advantage of my great weakness, and to employ for your own purpose that excessive, astonishing, and fatal love which your treacherous looks have inspired! Defend yourself at least from this crime that overwhelms me, and stop pretending to be guilty. Show me, if you can, that this letter is innocent; my affection will even consent to assist you. At any rate, endeavour to appear faithful, and I shall strive to believe you such.

CÉLIMÈNE. Bah, you are mad with your jealous frenzies and do not deserve the love which I have for you. I should much like to know what could compel me to stoop for you to the baseness of dissembling; and why, if my heart were disposed towards another, I should not say so candidly. What! Does the kind assurance of my sentiments toward you not defend me sufficiently against all your suspicions? Ought they to possess any weight at all with such a guarantee? Is it not insulting me even to listen to them? And since it is with the utmost difficulty that we can resolve to confess our

love, since the strict honour of our sex, hostile to our passion, strongly opposes such a confession, ought a lover who sees such an obstacle overcome for his sake, doubt with impunity our avowal? And is he not greatly to blame in not assuring himself of the truth of that which is never said but after a severe struggle with himself? Begone! Such suspicions deserve my anger, and you are not worthy of being cared for. I am silly, and am vexed at my own simplicity in still preserving the least kindness for you. I ought to place my affections elsewhere, and give you a just cause for complaint.

ALCESTE. Ah! You traitress! Mine is a strange infatuation for you; those tender expressions are, no doubt, meant only to deceive me. But it matters little, I must submit to my fate; my very soul is wrapt up in you; I will see to the bitter end how your heart will act towards me, and whether it will be black enough to deceive me.

CÉLIMÈNE. No, you do not love me as you ought to love.

ALCESTE. Indeed! Nothing is to be compared to my exceeding love; and, in its eagerness to show itself to the whole world, it goes even so far as to form wishes against you. Yes, I could wish that no one thought you handsome, that you were reduced to a miserable existence; that Heaven, at your birth, had bestowed upon you nothing; that you had no rank, no nobility, no wealth, so that I might openly proffer my heart, and thus make amends to you for the injustice of such a lot; and that, this very day, I might have the joy and the glory of seeing you owe everything to my love.

CÉLIMÈNE. This is wishing me well in a strange way! Heaven grant that you may never have occasion . . . But here comes Monsieur Dubois curiously decked out.

[Enter DUBOIS.]

ALCESTE. What means this strange attire, and that frightened look? What ails you?

DUBOIS. Sir . . .

ALCESTE. Well?

DUBOIS. The most mysterious event.

ALCESTE. What is it?

DUBOIS. Our affairs are turning out badly, Sir.

ALCESTE. What?

DUBOIS. Shall I speak out?

ALCESTE. Yes, do, and quickly.

DUBOIS. Is there no one there?

ALCESTE. Curse your trifling! Will you speak?

DUBOIS. Sir, we must beat a retreat.

ALCESTE. What do you mean?

DUBOIS. We must steal away from this quietly.

ALCESTE. And why?

DUBOIS. I tell you that we must leave this place.

ALCESTE. The reason?

DUBOIS. You must go, Sir, without staying to take leave.

ALCESTE. But what is the meaning of this strain?

DUBOIS. The meaning is, Sir, that you must make yourself scarce.

ALCESTE. I shall knock you on the head to a certainty, booby, if you do not explain yourself more clearly.

DUBOIS. A fellow, Sir, with a black dress, and as black a look, got as far as the kitchen to leave a paper with us, scribbled over in such a fashion that old Nick himself could not have read it. It is about your law-suit, I make no doubt; but the very devil, I believe, could not make head nor tail of it.

ALCESTE. Well, what then? What has the paper to do with the going away of which you speak, you scoundrel?

DUBOIS. I must tell you, Sir, that, about an hour afterwards, a gentleman who often calls, came to ask for you quite eagerly, and not finding you at home, quietly told me, knowing how attached I am to you, to let you know . . . Stop a moment; what the deuce is his name?

ALCESTE. Never mind his name, you scoundrel, and tell me what he told you.

DUBOIS. He is one of your friends, in short, that is sufficient. He told me that for your very life you must get away from this, and that you are threatened with arrest.

ALCESTE. But how! Has he not specified anything?

DUBOIS. No. He asked me for ink and paper, and has

sent you a line from which you can, I think, fathom the mystery!

ALCESTE. Hand it over then.

CÉLIMÈNE. What can all this mean?

ALCESTE. I do not know; but I am anxious to be informed. Have you almost done, devil take you?

DUBOIS [*after having fumbled for some time for the note*]. After all, Sir, I have left it on your table.

ALCESTE. I do not know what keeps me from . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Do not put yourself in a passion, but go and unravel this perplexing business.

ALCESTE. It seems that fate, whatever I may do has sworn to prevent my having a conversation with you. But, to get the better of her, allow me to see you again, Madam, before the end of the day.

ACT V

[*Enter ALCESTE and PHILINTE.*]

ALCESTE. I tell you, my mind is made up about it.

PHILINTE. But, whatever this blow may be, does it compel you . . .

ALCESTE. You may talk and argue till doomsday if you like, nothing can avert me from what I have said. The age we live in is too perverse, and I am determined to withdraw altogether from intercourse with the world. What! When honour, probity, decency, and the laws are all against my adversary; when the equity of my claim is everywhere cried up; when my mind is at rest as to the justice of my cause, I meanwhile see myself betrayed by its issue! What! I have got justice on my side, and I lose my case! A wretch, whose scandalous history is well known, comes off triumphant by the blackest falsehood! All good faith yields to his treachery! He finds the means of being in the right, whilst cutting my throat! The weight of his dissimulation, so full of cunning, overthrows the right and turns the scales of justice! He obtains even a decree of court to crown his villainy. And, not content with the wrong he is doing me, there is abroad in

society an abominable book, of which the very reading is to be condemned, a book that deserves the utmost severity, and of which the scoundrel has the impudence to proclaim me the author. Upon this, Oronte is observed to mutter, and tries wickedly to support the imposture! He, who holds an honourable position at Court, to whom I have done nothing except having been sincere and candid, who came to ask me in spite of myself of my opinion of some of his verses; and because I treat him honestly, and will not betray either him or truth, he assists in overwhelming me with a trumped-up crime. Behold him now my greatest enemy! And I shall never obtain his sincere forgiveness, because I did not think that his sonnet was good! 'Sdeath! to think that mankind is made thus! The thirst for fame induces them to do such things! This is the good faith, the virtuous zeal, the justice and the honour to be found amongst them! Let us begone; it is too much to endure the vexations they are devising; let us get out of this wood, this cut-throat hole; and since men behave towards each other like real wolves, wretches, you shall never see me again as long as I live.

PHILINTE. I think you are acting somewhat hastily; and the harm done is not so great as you would make it out. Whatever your adversary dares to impute to you has not had the effect of causing you to be arrested. We see his false reports defeating themselves, and this action is likely to hurt him much more than you.

ALCESTE. Him? he does not mind the scandal of such tricks as these. He has a license to be an arrant knave; and this event, far from damaging his position, will obtain him a still better standing to-morrow.

PHILINTE. In short, it is certain that little notice has been taken of the report which his malice spread against you; from that side you have already nothing to fear; and as for your law-suit, of which you certainly have reason to complain, it is easy for you to bring the trial on afresh, and against this decision . . .

ALCESTE. No, I shall leave it as it is. Whatever cruel wrong this verdict may inflict, I shall take particular care not

to have it set aside. We see too plainly how right is maltreated in it, and I wish to go down to posterity as a signal proof, as a notorious testimony of the wickedness of the men of our age. It may indeed cost me twenty thousand francs, but at the cost of twenty thousand francs I shall have the right of railing against the iniquity of human nature, and of nourishing an undying hatred of it.

PHILINTE. But after all . . .

ALCESTE. But after all, your pains are thrown away. What can you, sir, say upon this head? Would you have the assurance to wish, to my face, to excuse the villainy of all that is happening?

PHILINTE. No, I agree with you in all that you say. Everything goes by intrigue, and by pure influence. It is only trickery which carries the day in our time, and men ought to act differently. But is their want of equity a reason for wishing to withdraw from their society? All human failings give us, in life, the means of exercising our philosophy. It is the best employment for virtue; and if probity reigned everywhere, if all hearts were candid, just, and tractable, most of our virtues would be useless to us, inasmuch as their functions are to bear, without annoyance, the injustice of others in our good cause; and just in the same way as a heart full of virtue . . .

ALCESTE. I know that you are a most fluent speaker, sir; that you always abound in fine arguments; but you are wasting your time, and all your fine speeches. Reason tells me to retire for my own good. I cannot command my tongue sufficiently; I cannot answer for what I might say, and should very probably get myself into a hundred scrapes. Allow me, without any more words, to wait for Célimène. She must consent to the plan that brings me here. I shall see whether her heart has any love for me; and this very hour will prove it to me.

PHILINTE. Let us go upstairs to Éliante and wait her coming.

ALCESTE. No, my mind is too harassed. You go and see

her, and leave me in this little dark corner with my black care.

PHILINTE. That is strange company to leave you in; I will induce Éliante to come down. [Exit PHILINTE.]

[Enter CÉLIMÈNE and ORONTE.]

ORONTE. Yes, Madam, it remains for you to consider whether, by ties so dear, you will make me wholly yours; I must be absolutely certain of your affection: a lover dislikes to be held in suspense upon such a subject. If the ardour of my affection has been able to move your feelings, you ought not to hesitate to let me see it; and the proof, after all, which I ask of you is not to allow Alceste to wait upon you any longer; to sacrifice him to my love, and, in short, to banish him from your house this very day.

CÉLIMÈNE. But why are you so incensed against him; you, whom I have so often heard speak of his merits?

ORONTE. There is no need, Madam, of these explanations; the question is, what are your feelings? Please to choose between the one or the other; my resolution depends entirely upon yours.

ALCESTE [*coming out of his corner*]. Yes, this gentleman is right, Madam, you must make a choice; and his request agrees perfectly with mine. I am equally eager, and the same anxiety brings me here. My love requires a sure proof. Things cannot go on any longer in this way, and the moment has arrived for explaining your feelings.

ORONTE. I have no wish, Sir, in any way to disturb, by an untimely affection, your good fortune.

ALCESTE. And I have no wish, Sir, jealous or not jealous, to share aught in her heart with you.

ORONTE. If she prefers your affection to mine . . .

ALCESTE. If she has the slightest inclination towards you . . .

ORONTE. I swear henceforth not to pretend to it again.

ALCESTE. I peremptorily swear never to see her again.

ORONTE. Madam, it remains with you now to speak openly.

ALCESTE. Madam, you can explain yourself fearlessly.

ORONTE. You have simply to tell us where your feelings are engaged.

ALCESTE. You may simply finish the matter, by choosing between us two.

ORONTE. What! You seem to be at a loss to make such a choice.

ALCESTE. What! Your heart still wavers and appears uncertain!

CÉLIMÈNE. Good Heavens, how out of place is this persistence, and how very unreasonable you both show yourselves! It is not that I do not know whom to prefer, nor is it my heart that wavers. It is not at all in doubt between you two; and nothing could be more quickly accomplished than the choice of my affections. But to tell the truth, I feel too confused to pronounce such an avowal before you: I think that disobliging words ought not to be spoken in people's presence; that a heart can give sufficient proof of its attachment without going so far as to break with everyone; and gentler intimations suffice to inform a lover of the ill success of his suit.

ORONTE. No, no, I do not fear a frank avowal; for my part I consent to it.

ALCESTE. And I demand it; it is just its very publicity that I claim, and I do not wish you to spare my feelings in the least. Your great study has always been to keep friends with everyone; but no more trifling, no more uncertainty. You must explain yourself clearly, or I shall take your refusal as a verdict; I shall know, for my part, how to interpret your silence, and shall consider it as a confirmation of the worst.

ORONTE. I owe you many thanks, sir, for this wrath, and I say in every respect as you do.

CÉLIMÈNE. How you weary me with such a whim! Is there any justice in what you ask? And have I not told you what motive prevents me? I will be judged by Éliante, who is just coming.

[*Enter ÉLIANTE and PHILINTE.*]

CÉLIMÈNE. Good cousin, I am being persecuted here by people who have concerted to do so. They both demand,

with the same warmth, that I should declare whom my heart has chosen, and that, by a decision which I must give before their very faces, I should forbid one of them to tease me any more with his attentions. Say, has ever such a thing been done?

ÉLIANTE. Pray, do not consult me upon such a matter. You may perhaps address yourself to a wrong person, for I am decidedly for people who speak their minds.

ORONTE. Madam, it is useless for you to decline.

ALCESTE. All your evasions here will be badly supported.

ORONTE. You must speak, you must, and no longer waver.

ALCESTE. You need do no more than remain silent.

ORONTE. I desire but one word to end our discussions.

ALCESTE. To me your silence will convey as much as speech.

[*Enter ARSINOÉ, ACASTE, and CLITANDRE.*]

ACASTE [*to CÉLIMÈNE*]. We have both come, by your leave, Madam, to clear up a certain little matter with you.

CLITANDRE [*to ORONTE and ALCESTE*]. Your presence happens fortunately, gentlemen; for this affair concerns you also.

ARSINOÉ [*to CÉLIMÈNE*]. No doubt you are surprised at seeing me here, Madam; but these gentlemen are the cause of my intrusion. They both came to see me, and complained of a proceeding which I could not have credited. I have too high an opinion of your kindness of heart ever to believe you capable of such a crime; my eyes even have refused to give credence to their strongest proofs, and in my friendship, forgetting trivial disagreements, I have been induced to accompany them here, to hear you refute this slander.

ACASTE. Yes, Madam, let us see, with composure, how you will manage to bear this out. This letter has been written by you, to Clitandre.

CLITANDRE. And this tender epistle you have addressed to Acaste.

ACASTE [*to ORONTE and ALCESTE*]. This writing is not altogether unknown to you, gentlemen, and I have no doubt that her kindness has before now made you familiar with her hand. But this is well worth the trouble of reading.

"You are a strange man to condemn my liveliness of spirits, and to reproach me that I am never so merry as when I am not with you. Nothing could be more unjust; and if you do not come very soon to ask my pardon for this offence, I shall never forgive you as long as I live. Our great hulking booby of a Viscount." He ought to have been here. "Our great hulking booby of a Viscount, with whom you begin your complaints, is a man who would not at all suit me; and ever since I watched him for full three-quarters of an hour spitting in a well to make circles in the water, I never could have a good opinion of him. As for the little Marquis . . ." that is I, ladies and gentlemen, be it said without the slightest vanity, . . . "as for the little Marquis, who held my hand yesterday for a long while, I think that there is nothing so diminutive as his whole person, and his sole merit consists in his cloak and sword. As to the man with the green shoulder knot." [To ALCESTE.] It is your turn now, Sir. "As to the man with the green shoulder knot, he amuses me sometimes with his bluntness and his splenetic behaviour; but there are hundred of times when I think him the greatest bore in the world. Respecting the man with the big waistcoat . . ." [To ORONTE.] This is your share. "Respecting the man with the big waistcoat, who has thought fit to set up as a wit, and wishes to be an author in spite of everyone, I cannot even take the trouble to listen to what he says; and his prose bores me just as much as his poetry. Take it for granted that I do not always enjoy myself so much as you think; and that I wish for you, more than I care to say, amongst all the entertainments to which I am dragged; and that the presence of those we love is an excellent relish to our pleasures."

CLITANDRE. Now for me.

"Your Clitandre, whom you mention to me, and who has always such a quantity of soft expressions at his command, is the last man for whom I could feel any affection. He must be crazed in persuading himself that I love him; and you are so too in believing that I do not love you. You had better change your fancies for his, and come and see me as often as you can, to help me in bearing the annoyance of being pestered

by him." This shows the model of a lovely character, Madam; and I need not tell you what to call it. It is enough. We shall, both of us, show this admirable sketch of your heart everywhere and to everybody. *[Exit CLITANDRE.]*

ACASTE. I might also say something, and the subject is tempting; but I deem you beneath my anger; and I will show you that little marquises can find worthier hearts than yours to console themselves with. *[Exit ACASTE.]*

ORONTE. What! Am I to be pulled to pieces in this fashion, after all that you have written to me? And does your heart, with all its semblance of love, plight its faith to all mankind by turns! Bah, I have been too great a dupe, but I shall be so no longer. You have done me a service in showing yourself in your true colours. I am the richer by a heart which you thus restore to me, and I find my revenge in your loss. *[To ALCESTE.]* Sir, I shall no longer be an obstacle to your flame, and you may settle matters with this lady as soon as you please. *[Exit ORONTE.]*

ARSINOÉ *[to CÉLIMÈNE]*. This is certainly one of the basest actions which I have ever seen; I can no longer be silent, and I feel quite upset. Has any one ever seen the like of it? I do not concern myself much in the affairs of other people, but this gentleman *[pointing to ALCESTE]*, who has staked the whole of his happiness on you, an honourable and deserving man like this, who worshipped you to madness, ought he to have been . . .

ALCESTE. Leave me, I pray you, madam, to manage my own affairs; and do not trouble yourself unnecessarily. In vain do I see you espouse my quarrel. I am unable to repay you for this great zeal; and if ever I intended to avenge myself by choosing some one else, it would not be you whom I should select.

ARSINOÉ. And do you imagine, sir, that I ever harboured such a thought, and that I am so very anxious to secure you? You must be very vain, indeed, to flatter yourself with such an idea. Célimène's leavings are a commodity of which no one needs be so very much enamoured. Pray, undeceive yourself, and do not carry matters with so high a hand.

People like me are not for such as you. You will do much better to remain dangling after her skirts, and I long to see so beautiful a match. *[Exit ARSINOÉ.]*

ALCESTE *[to CÉLIMÈNE]*. Well! I have held my tongue, notwithstanding all I have seen, and I have let everyone have his say before me. Have I controlled myself long enough? And will you now allow me . . .

CÉLIMÈNE. Yes, you may say what you like; you are justified when you complain, and you may reproach me with anything you please. I confess that I am in the wrong; and overwhelmed by confusion, I do not seek by any idle excuse to palliate my fault. The anger of the others I have despised; but I admit my guilt toward you. No doubt your resentment is just; I know how culpable I must appear to you, that everything speaks of my treachery to you, and that, in short, you have cause to hate me. Do so, I consent to it.

ALCESTE. But can I do so, you traitress? Can I thus get the better of all my tenderness for you? And although I wish to hate you with all my soul, shall I find a heart quite ready to obey me. *[To ÉLIANTE and PHILINTE.]* You see what an unworthy passion can do, and I call you both as witnesses of my infatuation. Nor, truth to say, is this all, and you will see me carry it out to the bitter end, to show you that it is wrong to call us wise. *[To CÉLIMÈNE.]* Yes, perfidious creature, I am willing to forget your crimes. I can find, in my own heart, an excuse for all your doings and hide them under the name of a weakness into which the vices of the age betrayed your youth, provided your heart will second the design which I have formed of avoiding all human creatures, and that you are determined to follow me without delay into the solitude in which I have made a vow to pass my days. It is by this only, that, in everyone's opinion, you can repair the harm done by your letters, and that, after the scandal which every noble heart must abhor, it may still be possible for me to love you.

CÉLIMÈNE. What! I renounce the world before I grow old, and bury myself in your wilderness!

ALCESTE. If your affection responds to mine, what need the

rest of the world signify to you? Am I not sufficient for you?

CÉLIMÈNE. Solitude is frightful to a widow of twenty. I do not feel my mind sufficiently grand and strong to resolve to adopt such a plan. If the gift of my hand can satisfy your wishes, I might be induced to tie such bonds; and marriage . . .

ALCESTE. No. My heart loathes you now, and this refusal alone effects more than all the rest. As you are not disposed, in those sweet ties, to find all in all in me, as I would find all in all in you, begone; I refuse your offer, and this much-felt outrage frees me for ever from your unworthy toils. *[Exit CÉLIMÈNE.]*

ALCESTE *[to ÉLIANTE]*. Madam, your beauty is adorned by a hundred virtues; and I never saw anything in you but what was sincere. For a long while I thought very highly of you; but allow me to esteem you thus for ever, and suffer my heart in its various troubles not to offer itself for the honour of your acceptance. I feel too unworthy, and begin to perceive that Heaven did not intend me for the marriage bond; that the homage of only the remainder of a heart unworthy of you would be below your merit, and that in short . . .

ÉLIANTE. You may pursue this thought. I am not at all embarrassed with my hand; and here is your friend, who, without giving me much trouble, might possibly accept it if I asked him.

PHILINTE. Ah! Madam, I ask for nothing better than that honour, and I could sacrifice my life and soul for it.

ALCESTE. May you, to taste true contentment, preserve for ever these feelings towards each other! Deceived on all sides, overwhelmed with injustice, I will fly from an abyss where vice is triumphant, and seek out some small secluded nook on earth, where one may enjoy the freedom of being an honest man.

PHILINTE. Come, Madam, let us leave nothing untried to deter him from the design on which his heart is set.

LOVE FOR LOVE

(1695)

BY

WILLIAM CONGREVE

CHARACTERS

SIR SAMPSON LEGEND, *father to Valentine and Ben.*

VALENTINE, *Sir Sampson's elder son.*

BEN, *Sir Sampson's younger son.*

SCANDAL, *Valentine's friend.*

TATTLE, *a beau.*

FORESIGHT, *uncle to Angelica.*

JEREMY, *a servant to Valentine.*

TRAPLAND, *a scrivener.*

BUCKRAM, *a lawyer.*

ANGELICA, *niece to Foresight.*

MRS. FORESIGHT, *second wife to Foresight.*

MRS. FRAIL, *sister to Mrs. Foresight.*

MISS PRUE, *daughter to Foresight by a former wife.*

NURSE, *to Miss Prue.*

JENNY.

Steward, Officers, Sailors, and Servants.

SCENE—*London.*

FROM THE PROLOGUE

. . .
We hope there's something that may please each taste,
And though of homely fare we make the feast,
Yet you will find variety at least.
There's humor, which for cheerful friends we got,
And for the thinking party there's a plot.
We've something, too, to gratify ill-nature,
(If there be any here) and that is satire;
Though satire scarce dares grin, 'tis grown so mild,
Or only shows its teeth as if it smiled.

. . .
This time the poet owns the bold essay,
Yet hopes there's no ill manners in his play:
And he declares by me, he has designed
Affront to none, but frankly speaks his mind.

LOVE FOR LOVE

ACT I

SCENE—VALENTINE'S *lodging*.

[VALENTINE *is reading*, JEREMY *waiting: several books upon the table.*]

VALENTINE. Jeremy!

JEREMY. Sir.

VALENTINE. Here, take away; I'll walk a turn, and digest what I have read.

JEREMY [*aside*]. You'll grow devilish fat upon this paper diet. [*Takes away the books.*]

VALENTINE. And d'ye hear, go you to breakfast— There's a page doubled down in Epictetus that is a feast for an emperor.

JEREMY. Was Epictetus a real cook, or did he only write receipts?

VALENTINE. Read, read, sirrah, and refine your appetite; learn to live upon instruction; feast your mind, and mortify your flesh; read, and take your nourishment in at your eyes; shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding! So Epictetus advises.

JEREMY. O Lord! I have heard much of him, when I waited upon a gentleman at Cambridge. Pray, what was that Epictetus?

VALENTINE. A very rich man—not worth a groat.

JEREMY. Humph, and so he has made a very fine feast where there is nothing to be eaten.

VALENTINE. Yes.

JEREMY. Sir, you're a gentleman, and probably understand this fine feeding; but if you please, I had rather be at board-wages. Does your Epictetus, or your Seneca here, or any of these poor rich rogues, teach you how to pay your debts without money? Will they shut up the mouths of your

creditors? Will Plato be bail for you? Or Diogenes, because he understands confinement, and lived in a tub, go to prison for you? 'Slife, sir, what do you mean, to mew yourself up here with three or four musty books, in commendation of starving and poverty?

VALENTINE. Why, sirrah, I have no money—you know it—and therefore resolve to rail at all that have; and in that I but follow the examples of the wisest and wittiest men in all ages, these poets and philosophers whom you naturally hate, for just such another reason—because they abound in sense, and you are a fool.

JEREMY. Ay, sir, I am a fool, I know it: and yet, Heaven help me, I'm poor enough to be a wit—but I was always a fool when I told you what your expenses would bring you to; your coaches and your liveries; your treats and your balls; your being in love with a lady that did not care a farthing for you in your prosperity; and keeping company with wits that cared for nothing but your prosperity, and now, when you are poor, hate you as much as they do one another.

VALENTINE. Well, and now I am poor, I have an opportunity to be revenged on them all; I'll pursue Angelica with more love than ever, and appear more notoriously her admirer in this restraint than when I openly rivalled the rich fops that made court to her. So shall my poverty be a mortification to her pride, and, perhaps, make her compassionate that love which has principally reduced me to this lowness of fortune. And for the wits, I'm sure I am in a condition to be even with them.

JEREMY. Nay, your condition is pretty even with theirs, that's the truth on't.

VALENTINE. I'll take some of their trade out of their hands.

JEREMY. Now Heaven, of Mercy, continue the tax upon paper! You don't mean to write?

VALENTINE. Yes, I do; I'll write a play.

JEREMY. Hem!—Sir, if you please to give me a small certificate of three lines—only to certify those whom it may concern, that the bearer hereof, Jeremy Fetch by name, has

for the space of seven years truly and faithfully served Valentine Legend, Esq; and that he is not now turned away for any misdemeanour, but does voluntarily dismiss his master from any future authority over him . . .

VALENTINE. No, sirrah, you shall live with me still.

JEREMY. Sir, it's impossible—I may die with you, starve with you, or be hanged with your works: but to live, even three days, the life of a play, I no more expect it, than to be canonized for a muse, after my decease.

VALENTINE. You are witty, you rogue! I shall want your help; I'll have you learn to make couplets, to tag the ends of acts. D'ye hear, get the maids to crambo in an evening, and learn the knack of rhyming, you may arrive at the height of a song, sent by an unknown hand, or a chocolate-house lampoon.

JEREMY. But sir, is this the way to recover your father's favour? Why, Sir Sampson will be irreconcilable. If your younger brother should come from sea, he'd never look upon you again. You're undone, sir; you're ruin'd; you won't have a friend left in the world, if you turn poet.—Ah, pox confound that Will's Coffee-house. It has ruined more young men than the Royal Oaks lottery . . . nothing thrives that belongs to't.

[Enter SCANDAL.]

JEREMY. Mr. Scandal, for Heaven's sake, sir, try if you can dissuade him from turning poet.

SCANDAL. Poet! He shall turn soldier first, and rather depend upon the outside of his head, than the lining. Why, what the devil! Has not your poverty made you enemies enough? Must you needs show your wit to get more?

JEREMY. Ay, more indeed: for who cares for anybody that has more wit than himself?

SCANDAL. Jeremy speaks like an oracle. Don't you see how worthless great men, and dull, rich rogues avoid a witty man of small fortune? Why, he looks like a writ of enquiry into their titles and estates; and seems commissioned by Heaven to seize the better half.

VALENTINE. Therefore I would rail in my writings, and be revenged.

SCANDAL. Rail? At whom? The whole world? Impotent and vain! . . . You may stand at bay for a while; but when the full cry is against you, you shan't have fair play for your life. If you can't be fairly run down by the hounds, you will be treacherously shot by the huntsmen.—No, turn flatterer, quack, lawyer, parson; . . . be anything but poet: a modern poet is worse, more servile, timorous, and fawning than any I have named. Without you could retrieve the ancient honors of the name, recall the stage of Athens, and be allowed the force of open honest satire.

VALENTINE. You are as inveterate against our poets, as if your character had been lately exposed upon the stage.—Nay, I am not violently bent upon the trade.—[*One Knocks.*] Jeremy, see who's there. [*Exit JEREMY.*] But tell me what you would have me do? What does the world say of me, and my forced confinement?

SCANDAL. The world behaves itself, as it uses to do on such occasions: some pity you and condemn your father; others excuse him and blame you. Only the ladies are merciful and wish you well, since love and pleasurable expense have been your greatest faults.

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

VALENTINE. How now?

JEREMY. Nothing new, sir. I have dispatched some half a dozen duns with as much dexterity as a hungry judge does causes at dinner-time.

VALENTINE. What answer have you given 'em?

SCANDAL. Patience, I suppose, the old receipt.

JEREMY. No, faith sir; I have put 'em off so long with patience and forbearance, and other fair words, that I was forced now to tell 'em in plain downright English——

VALENTINE. What?

JEREMY. That they should be paid.

VALENTINE. When?

JEREMY. To-morrow.

VALENTINE. And how the devil do you mean to keep your word?

JEREMY. Keep it? Not at all; it has been so very much stretched that I reckon it will break of course by to-morrow, and nobody be surprized at the matter— [*Knocking.*]— Again! Sir, if you don't like my negotiations, will you be pleased to answer these yourself.

VALENTINE. See who they are. [*Exit JEREMY.*] By this, Scandal, you may see what it is to be great; secretaries of state, presidents of the council, and generals of an army lead just such a life as I do; have just such crowds of visitants in a morning, all soliciting of past promises; which are but a civiller sort of duns, that lay claim to voluntary debts.

SCANDAL. And you, like a true great man, having engaged their attendance, and promised more than ever you intended to perform, are more perplexed to find evasions than you would be to invent the honest means of keeping your word, and gratifying your creditors.

VALENTINE. Scandal, learn to spare your friends, and do not provoke your enemies; this liberty of your tongue will one day bring a confinement on your body my friend.

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

JEREMY. O Sir, there's Trapland the scrivener, with two suspicious fellows like lawful pads, that would knock a man down with pocket-tipstaves— And there's your father's steward, and the nurse with one of your children from Twitnam.

VALENTINE. Pox on her! Could she find no other time to fling my sins in my face? Here, give her this [*Gives money.*] and bid her trouble me no more. . . .

Bid Trapland come in. [*Exit JEREMY.*] If I can give that Cerberus a sop, I shall be at rest for one day.

[*Enter TRAPLAND and JEREMY.*]

VALENTINE. O Mr. Trapland, my old friend! Welcome. Jeremy, a chair quickly; a bottle of sack and a toast! Fly—a chair first.

TRAPLAND. A good morning to you Mr. Valentine, and to you Mr. Scandal.

SCANDAL. The morning's a very good morning, if you don't spoil it.

VALENTINE. Come sit you down, you know his way.

TRAPLAND [*sits*]. There is a debt, Mr. Valentine, of 1500*l.* of pretty long standing——

VALENTINE. I cannot talk about business with a thirsty palate—sirrah, the sack.

TRAPLAND. And I desire to know what course you have taken for the payment?

VALENTINE. Faith and troth, I am heartily glad to see you—my service to you—fill, fill, to honest Mr. Trapland, fuller.

TRAPLAND. Hold, sweet-heart—This is not to our business. My service to you Mr. Scandal—[*Drinks.*]—I have forborn as long——

VALENTINE. T'other glass, and then we'll talk. Fill, Jeremy.

TRAPLAND. No more, in truth. I have forborn, I say—

VALENTINE. Sirrah, fill when I bid you. And how does your handsome daughter? Come, a good husband to her.

[*Drinks.*]

TRAPLAND. Thank you—I have been out of this money——

VALENTINE. Drink first. Scandal, why do you not drink?

[*They drink.*]

TRAPLAND. And in short, I can be put off no longer.

VALENTINE. I was much obliged to you for your supply. It did me signal service in my necessity. But you delight in doing good. Scandal, drink with me, my friend Trapland's health. An honest man lives not, nor one more ready to serve his friend in distress, though I say it to his face. Come, fill each man his glass.

SCANDAL. What, I know Trapland loves a wench still. . . .

TRAPLAND. Fie, Mr. Scandal, you never knew——

SCANDAL. What don't I know?—I know the buxom black widow in the *Poultry*——800*l.* a year jointure, and 20000*l.* in money. Ahah! Old Trap.

VALENTINE. Say you so, i'faith. Come, we'll remember the widow. I know whereabouts you are; come, to the widow—

TRAPLAND. No more indeed.

VALENTINE. What, the widow's health; give it him—off with it. [*They drink.*] A lovely girl, i'faith, black sparkling eyes, soft pouting ruby lips? Better sealing there, than a bond for a million, hah!

TRAPLAND. No, no, there's no such thing; we'd better mind our business—you're a wag.

VALENTINE. . . . And the prettiest foot! Oh if a man could but fasten his eyes to her feet, as they steal in and out, and play at bo-peep under her petticoats, ah! Mr. Trapland?

TRAPLAND. Verily, give me a glass—you're a wag,—and here's to the widow. [*Drinks.*]

SCANDAL. He begins to chuckle—ply him close, or he'll relapse into a dun.

[*Enter an Officer.*]

OFFICER. By your leave, gentlemen—Mr. Trapland, if we must do our office, tell us. We have half a dozen gentlemen to arrest in *Pall Mall* and *Covent Garden*, and if we don't make haste, the chairmen will be abroad and block up the chocolate houses, and then our labour's lost.

TRAPLAND. Udso that's true. Mr. Valentine I love mirth, but business must be done; are you ready to—

JEREMY. Sir, your father's steward says he comes to make proposals concerning your debts.

VALENTINE. Bid him come in: Mr. Trapland, send away your officer, you shall have an answer presently.

TRAPLAND. Stay within call. [*Exit Officer.*]

[*Enter STEWARD who whispers to VALENTINE.*]

SCANDAL. Here's a dog now, a traitor in his wine. [*To TRAPLAND.*] Sirrah refund the sack. Jeremy, fetch him some warm water, or I'll rip up his stomach, and go the shortest way to his conscience.

TRAPLAND. Mr. Scandal, you are uncivil; I did not value your sack; but you cannot expect it again when I have drunk it.

SCANDAL. And how do you expect to have your money again, when a gentleman has spent it?

VALENTINE. You need say no more, I understand the conditions. They are very hard, but my necessity is very pressing; I agree to 'em. Take Mr. Trapland with you and let him draw the writing. Mr. Trapland, you know this man; he shall satisfy you.

TRAPLAND. Sincerely, I am loth to be thus pressing, but my necessity—

VALENTINE. No apology, good Mr. Scrivener; you shall be paid.

TRAPLAND. I hope you forgive me, my business requires—

[*Exeunt TRAPLAND, the Officer, and JEREMY.*]

SCANDAL. He begs pardon like a hangman at an execution.

VALENTINE. But I have got a reprieve.

SCANDAL. I am surprised. What! Does your father relent?

VALENTINE. No; he has sent me the hardest conditions in the world. You have heard of a booby brother of mine that was sent to sea three years ago? This brother my father hears is landed; whereupon he very affectionately sends me word, if I will make a deed of conveyance of my right to his estate after his death to my younger brother, he will immediately furnish me with four thousand pounds to pay my debts, and make my fortune. This was once proposed before, and I refused it; but the present impatience of my creditors for their money, and my own impatience of confinement and absence from Angelica, force me to consent.

SCANDAL. A very desperate demonstration of your love to Angelica, and I think she has never given you any assurance of hers.

VALENTINE. You know her temper; she never gave me any great reason either for hope or despair.

SCANDAL. Women of her airy temper, as they seldom think before they act, so they rarely give us any light to guess at what they mean. But you have little reason to believe that a woman of this age, who has had an indifference for you in your prosperity, will fall in love with your ill fortune; be-

sides, Angelica has a great fortune of her own, and great fortunes either expect another great fortune, or a fool.

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

JEREMY. More misfortunes, sir.

VALENTINE. What, another dun?

JEREMY. No, sir, but Mr. Tattle is come to wait upon you.

VALENTINE. Well, I can't help it—you must bring him up; he knows I don't go abroad. [*Exit JEREMY.*]

SCANDAL. Pox on him, I'll be gone.

VALENTINE. No, prithee stay: Tattle and you should never be asunder; you are light and shadow, and show one another. He is perfectly your reverse both in humour and understanding, and, as you set up for defamation, he is a mender of reputations.

SCANDAL. A mender of reputations! Ay, just as he is a keeper of secrets, another virtue that he sets up for in the same manner. For the rogue will speak aloud in the posture of a whisper; and deny a woman's name, while she gives you the marks of her person. He will forswear receiving a letter from her, and at the same time, show you her hand in the superscription. And yet perhaps he has counterfeited the hand, too, and sworn to a truth; but he hopes not to be believed; and refuses the reputation of a lady's favour, as a doctor says *No* to a bishoprick, only that it may be granted him. In short, he is a public professor of secrecy, and makes proclamation that he holds private intelligence—He's here.

[*Enter TATTLE.*]

TATTLE. Valentine, good morrow. Scandal I am yours—that is, when you speak well of me.

SCANDAL. That is, when I am yours; for while I am my own, or anybody's else, that will never happen.

TATTLE. How inhuman!

VALENTINE. Why, Tattle, you need not be much concerned at anything that he says. For to converse with Scandal is to play at losing loadnum; you must lose a good name to him before you can win it for your self.

TATTLE. But how barbarous that is, and how unfortunate for him, that the world shall think the better of any person for his calumnation!—I thank Heaven, it has always been a part of my character to handle the reputations of others very tenderly indeed.

SCANDAL. Ay, such rotten reputations as you have to deal with are to be handled tenderly indeed.

TATTLE. Nay, but why rotten? Why should you say rotten, when you know not the persons of whom you speak? How cruel that is?

SCANDAL. Not know 'em? Why, thou never hadst to do with anybody that did not stink to all the town.

TATTLE. Ha, ha, ha! Nay, now you make a jest of it indeed. For there is nothing more known, than that nobody knows anything of that nature of me. As I hope to be saved, Valentine, I never exposed a woman, since I knew what woman was.

VALENTINE. And yet you have conversed with several.

TATTLE. To be free with you, I have—I don't care if I own that—.

SCANDAL. What think you of that Noble Commoner, Mrs. Drab?

TATTLE. Pooh, I know Madam Drab has made her brags in three or four places, that I said this and that, and writ to her, and did I know not what—But, upon my reputation, she did me wrong—Well, well, that was malice—But I know the bottom of it. She was bribed to that by one we all know—A man too. Only to bring me into disgrace with a certain woman of quality—

SCANDAL. Whom we all know.

TATTLE. No matter for that—Yes, yes, everybody knows—No doubt on't, everybody knows my secrets—But I soon satisfied the lady of my innocence; for I told her—madam, says I, there are some persons who make it their business to tell stories and say this and that of one and t'other and everything in the world; and, says I, if your Grace—

SCANDAL. Grace!

TATTLE. O Lord, what have I said? My unlucky tongue!

VALENTINE. Ha, ha, ha.

SCANDAL. Why, Tattle, thou hast more impudence than one can in reason expect. I shall have an esteem for thee, well, and ha, ha, ha, well, go on, and what did you say to her Grace?

VALENTINE. I confess this is something extraordinary.

TATTLE. Not a word, as I hope to be saved. . . . Come, let's talk of something else.

VALENTINE. Well, but how did you acquit yourself?

TATTLE. Pooh, pooh, nothing at all. I only rallied with you—a woman of ordinary rank was a little jealous of me, and I told her something or other, faith—I know not what—Come, let's talk of something else. [*Hums a song.*]

SCANDAL. Hang him, let him alone, he has a mind we should enquire.

TATTLE. Valentine, I supped last night with your mistress, and her uncle, old Foresight; I think your father lies at Foresight's.

VALENTINE. Yes.

TATTLE. Upon my soul Angelica's a fine woman— And so is Mrs. Foresight, and her sister, Mrs. Frail.

SCANDAL. Yes, Mrs. Frail is a very fine woman; we all know her.

TATTLE. Oh that is not fair.

SCANDAL. What?

TATTLE. To tell.

SCANDAL. To tell what? Why, what do you know of Mrs. Frail?

TATTLE. Who I? Upon honor I don't know whether she be man or woman; but by the smoothness of her chin, and roundness of her hips.

SCANDAL. No!

TATTLE. No.

SCANDAL. She says otherwise.

TATTLE. Impossible!

SCANDAL. Yes Faith. Ask Valentine else.

TATTLE. Why then, as I hope to be saved, I believe a

woman only obliges a man to secrecy that she may have the pleasure of telling herself.

SCANDAL. No doubt on't. Well, but has she done you wrong, or no?

TATTLE. Though I have more honour than to tell first; I have more manners than to contradict what a lady has declared.

SCANDAL. Well, you own it?

TATTLE. I am strangely surprised. Yes, yes, I can't deny it, if she taxes me with it.

SCANDAL. She'll be here by and by; she sees Valentine every morning.

TATTLE. How!

VALENTINE. She does me the favour—I mean of a visit sometimes. I did not think she had granted more to anybody.

SCANDAL. Nor I, faith.—But Tattle does not use to belie a lady; it is contrary to his character.—How one may be deceived in a woman, Valentine!

TATTLE. Nay, what do you mean, gentlemen?

SCANDAL. I'm resolved I'll ask her.

TATTLE. O barbarous! Why did you not tell me—

SCANDAL. No, you told us.

TATTLE. And bid me ask Valentine?

VALENTINE. What did I say? I hope you won't bring me to confess an answer when you never asked me the question?

TATTLE. But, gentlemen, this is the most inhuman proceeding—

VALENTINE. Nay, if you have known Scandal thus long, and cannot avoid such a palpable decoy as this was, the ladies have a fine time whose reputations are in your keeping.

[Enter JEREMY.]

JEREMY. Sir, Mrs. Frail has sent to know if you are stirring.

VALENTINE. Show her up when she comes.

[Exit JEREMY.]

TATTLE. I'll be gone.

VALENTINE. You'll meet her.

TATTLE. Is there not a back way?

VALENTINE. If there were, you have more discretion, than to give Scandal such an advantage; why, your running away will prove all that he can tell her.

TATTLE. Scandal, you will not be so ungenerous—O, I shall lose my reputation of secrecy for ever—I shall never be received but upon public days; and my visits will never be admitted beyond a drawing-room: I shall never see a bed chamber again, never be locked in a closet, nor run behind a screen or under a table; never be distinguish'd among the waiting women by the name of trusty Mr. Tattle more.—You will not be so cruel.

VALENTINE. Scandal, have pity on him; he'll yield to any conditions.

TATTLE. Any, any terms.

SCANDAL. Come then, sacrifice half a dozen women of good reputation to me presently—Come, where are you familiar?—And see that they are women of quality too, the first quality—

TATTLE. 'Tis very hard.—Won't a baronet's lady pass?

SCANDAL. No, nothing under a right honourable.

TATTLE. O inhuman! You don't expect their names.

SCANDAL. No, their titles shall serve.

TATTLE. Alas, that's the same thing. Pray, spare me their titles; I'll describe their persons.

SCANDAL. Well, begin then: but take notice, if you are so ill a painter, that I cannot know the person by your picture of her, you must be condemned, like other bad painters, to write the name at the bottom.

TATTLE. Well, first then—

[Enter MRS. FRAIL.]

TATTLE. O unfortunate! She's come already. Will you have patience till another time?—I'll double the number.

SCANDAL. Well, on that condition.—Take heed you don't fail me.

MRS. FRAIL. I shall get a fine reputation, by coming to see fellows in a morning.—Scandal, you devil, are you here too?

—Oh Mr. Tattle, everything is safe with you, we know.
SCANDAL. Tattle!

TATTLE. Mum.—O madam, you do me too much honour.

VALENTINE. Well Lady Galloper, how does Angelica?

MRS. FRAIL. Angelica? Manners!

VALENTINE. What, you will allow an absent lover—

MRS. FRAIL. No, I'll allow a lover present with his mistress to be particular—but otherwise I think his passion ought to give place to his manners.

VALENTINE. But what if he has more passion than manners?

MRS. FRAIL. Then let him marry and reform.

VALENTINE. Marriage indeed may qualify the fury of his passion, but it very rarely mends a man's manners.

MRS. FRAIL. You are the most mistaken in the world; there is no creature perfectly civil, but a husband. For in a little time he grows rude only to his wife, and that is the highest good breeding, for it begets his civility to other people. Well, I'll tell you news—but I suppose you hear your Brother Benjamin is landed. And my Brother Foresight's daughter is come out of the country—I assure you, there's a match talked of by the old people.—Well, if he be but as great a sea-beast as she is a land-monster, we shall have a most amphibious breed.—The progeny will be all otters.

VALENTINE. Pox take 'em! Their conjunction bodes me no good, I'm sure.

MRS. FRAIL. Now you talk of conjunction, my brother Foresight has cast both their nativities, and prognosticates an admiral and an eminent justice of the peace to be the issue male of their two bodies. 'Tis the most superstitious old fool! He would have persuaded me that this was an unlucky day and would not let me come abroad. But I invented a dream, and sent him to Artimedorus for interpretation, and so stole out to see you. . . .

[Enter JEREMY.]

JEREMY. Sir, here's the steward again from your father.

VALENTINE. I'll come to him——will you give me leave; I'll wait on you again presently.

MRS. FRAIL. No, I'll be gone. Come, who squires me to the Exchange? I must call my sister Foresight there?

SCANDAL. I will: I have a mind to your sister.

MRS. FRAIL. Civil!

TATTLE. I will; because I have a tendre for your ladyship.

MRS. FRAIL. That's somewhat the better reason, to my opinion.

SCANDAL. Well, if Tattle entertains you, I have the better opportunity to engage your sister.

VALENTINE. Tell Angelica I am about making hard conditions to come abroad and be at liberty to see her.

SCANDAL. I'll give an account of you, and your proceedings. If indiscretion be a sign of love, you are the most a lover of anybody that I know: you fancy that parting with your estate will help you to your mistress.—In my mind he is a thoughtless adventurer

*Who hopes to purchase wealth, by selling land:
Or win a mistress, with a losing hand.*

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II

SCENE.—*A Room in FORESIGHT'S House.*

[*Enter FORESIGHT and SERVANT.*]

FORESIGHT. Hey day! What, are all the women of my family abroad? Is not my wife come home? Nor her sister, nor my daughter?

SERVANT. No, sir.

FORESIGHT. Mercy on us, what can be the meaning of it? Sure the moon is in all her fortitudes. . . .

[*Enter NURSE.*]

FORESIGHT. Nurse, where's your young mistress?

NURSE. Wee'st heart, I know not; they're none of 'em come home yet. Poor Child, I warrant she's fond o' seeing

the town—marry, pray Heaven they ha' given her any dinner. —Good lack-a-day, ha, ha, ha, Oh strange! I'll vow and swear now . . . ha, ha, ha, marry and did you ever see the like?

FORESIGHT. Why how now, what's the matter?

NURSE. Pray Heaven send your worship good luck; marry and amen with all my heart, for you have put on one stocking with the wrong side outward.

FORESIGHT. Ha, how? Faith and troth I'm glad of it, and so I have; that may be good luck in troth . . . in troth it may . . . very good luck. Nay, I have had some omens. I got out of bed backwards too this morning, without premeditation; pretty good that too; but then I stumbled coming down stairs, and met a weasel. Bad omens those. Some bad, some good; our lives are chequered . . . mirth and sorrow, want and plenty, night and day, make up our time.—But in troth I am pleased at my stocking; very well pleased at my stocking. . . . [To SERVANT.] Sirrah, go tell Sir Sampson Legend I'll wait on him if he's at leisure. [Exit SERVANT.] 'Tis now three o'clock, a very good hour for business. Mercury governs this hour.

[Enter SIR SAMPSON LEGEND, with a paper.]

SIR SAMPSON. Here 'tis; I have it in my hand, old Ptolemy. I'll make the ungracious prodigal know who begat him; I will, old Nostrodamus. What, I warrant my son thought nothing belonged to a father, but forgiveness and affection; no authority, no correction, no arbitrary power; nothing to be done but for him to offend and me to pardon. I warrant you, if he danced till doomsday, he thought I was to pay the piper. Well, but here it is under black and white, *signatum*, *sigillatum*, and *deliberatum*: that as soon as my son Benjamin is arrived, he is to make over to him his right of inheritance. Where's my daughter that is to be—ha! old Merlin! Body o'me, I'm so glad I'm revenged on this undutiful rogue.

FORESIGHT. Odso, let me see. Let me see the paper.—Aye, faith and troth, here 'tis, if it will but hold. I wish things were done, and the conveyance made. When was this signed,

what hour? Odso, you should have consulted me for the time. Well, but we'll make haste——

SIR SAMPSON. Haste, aye, aye; haste enough, my son, Ben, will be in town to-night. I have ordered my lawyer to draw up writings of settlement and jointure——all shall be done to-night. No matter for the time: prithee, Brother Foresight, leave superstition. Pox o'th' time! There's no time but the time present, there's no more to be said of what's past, and all that is to come will happen. If the sun shine by day, and the stars by night, why, we shall know one another's faces without the help of a candle, and that's all the stars are good for.

FORESIGHT. How, how? Sir Sampson, that all? Give me leave to contradict you, and tell you, you are ignorant.

SIR SAMPSON. I tell you I am wise; and *sapiens dominabitur astris*; there's Latin for you to prove it, and an argument to confound your ephemeris. Ignorant!——I tell you, I have travelled old Fircu, and know the globe. I have seen the Antipodes, where the sun rises at midnight, and sets at noon day.

FORESIGHT. But I tell you, I have travelled, and travelled in the celestial spheres, known the signs and the planets, and their houses. Can judge of motions direct and petrograde: . . . know whether life shall be long or short, happy or unhappy, whether diseases are curable or incurable. If journeys shall be prosperous, undertakings successful, or goods stolen recovered; I know——

SIR SAMPSON. I know the length of the Emperor of China's foot; have kissed the Great Mogul's slipper, and rid a hunting upon an elephant with the Cham of Tartary. . . .

[Enter JEREMY.]

SIR SAMPSON. How now, who sent for you? Ha! What would you have?

[JEREMY whispers to SIR SAMPSON.]

FORESIGHT. Who's that fellow? I don't like his physiognomy.

SIR SAMPSON [*to JEREMY*]. My son, sir; what son, sir? My son Benjamin, hoh?

JEREMY. No, sir, Mr. Valentine, my master.—'Tis the first time he has been abroad since his confinement, and he comes to pay his duty to you.

SIR SAMPSON. Well, sir.

[*Enter VALENTINE.*]

JEREMY. He is here, sir.

VALENTINE. Your blessing, sir.

SIR SAMPSON. You've had it already, sir, I think I sent it you to-day in a bill of four thousand pounds.—A great deal of money, Brother Foresight.

FORESIGHT. Ay indeed, Sir Sampson, a great deal of money for a young man. I wonder what he can do with it!

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, so do I.—Hark ye, Valentine, if there be too much, refund the superfluity; dost hear, boy?

VALENTINE. Superfluity, sir. It will scarce pay my debts. I hope you will have more indulgence, than to oblige me to those hard conditions which my necessity signed to.

SIR SAMPSON. Sir, how, I beseech you, what were you pleased to intimate concerning indulgence?

VALENTINE. Why, sir, that you would not go to the extremity of the conditions, but release me at least from some part.

SIR SAMPSON. Oh, sir, I understand you—that's all, ha?

VALENTINE. Yes, sir, all that I presume to ask; but what you, out of fatherly fondness, will be pleased to add shall be doubly welcome.

SIR SAMPSON. No doubt of it, sweet sir, but your filial piety and my fatherly fondness would fit like two tallies.—Here's a rogue, Brother Foresight, makes a bargain under hand and seal in the morning, and would be released from it in the afternoon; here's a rogue, dog, here's conscience and honesty; this is your wit now, this is the morality of your wits! You are a wit, and have been a beau, and may be a——why sirrah, is it not here under hand and seal? Can you deny it?

VALENTINE. Sir, I don't deny it.

SIR SAMPSON. Sirrah, you'll be hanged; I shall live to see you go up Holborn Hill. Has he not a rogue's face?—Speak, brother, you understand physiognomy—a hanging look to me; of all my boys the most unlike me. He has a damned Tyburn-Face, without the benefit o'the clergy.

FORESIGHT. Hum—truly I don't care to discourage a young man. He has a violent death in his face, but I hope no danger of hanging.

VALENTINE. Sir, is this usage for your son?—for that old weather-headed fool, I know how to laugh at him; but you, sir——

SIR SAMPSON. You, sir; and you, sir . . .

VALENTINE. I would have an excuse for your barbarity and unnatural usage.

SIR SAMPSON. Excuse? Impudence! Why, sirrah, mayn't I do what I please? Are not you my slave? Did not I beget you? And might not I have chosen whether I would have begot you or no? Oons! Who are you? How came you here? . . .

VALENTINE. I know no more why I came, than you do why you called me. But here I am, and if you don't mean to provide for me, I desire you would leave me as you found me.

SIR SAMPSON. With all my heart: come, uncase, strip, and go naked out of the world, as you came into't.

VALENTINE. My clothes are soon put off;—but you must also divest me of reason, thought, passions, inclinations, affections, appetites, senses, and the huge train of attendants that you begot along with me.

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, what a many-headed monster have I propagated!

VALENTINE. I am of myself, a plain, easy, simple creature; and to be kept at small expence; but the retinue that you gave me are craving and invincible. They are so many devils that you have raised, and will have employment.

SIR SAMPSON. Oons, what had I to do to get children.—Can't a private man be born without all these followers?—

Why, nothing under an emperor should be born with appetites.—Why at this rate a fellow that has but a groat in his pocket, may have a stomach capable of a ten shilling ordinary.

VALENTINE. Fortune was provident enough to supply all the necessities of my nature; if I had my right of inheritance.

SIR SAMPSON. Again! Oons! Han't three four thousand pounds? . . . Would'st thou have me turn pelican, and feed thee out of my own vitals?—'S'heart, live by your wits—you were always fond of the wits.—Now let's see, if you have wit enough to keep yourself.—Your brother will be in town to-night, or to-morrow morning, and then look you perform covenants—and so your friend and servant.—Come, Brother Foresight.

[*Exeunt SIR SAMPSON and FORESIGHT.*]

JEREMY. I told you what your visit would come to.

VALENTINE. 'Tis as much as I expected—I did not come to see him: I came to Angelica: but since she was gone abroad, it was easily turned another way and at least looked well on my side. What's here? Mrs. Foresight and Mrs. Frail; they are earnest.—I'll avoid 'em.—Come; this way, and go and enquire when Angelica will return.

[*Exeunt VALENTINE and JEREMY.*]

[*Enter MRS. FORESIGHT, and MRS. FRAIL.*]

MRS. FRAIL. What have you to do to watch me? 'S'life, I'll do what I please.

MRS. FORESIGHT. You will?

MRS. FRAIL. Yes, marry will I.—A great piece of business to go to Covent Garden Square in a hackney-coach, and take a turn with one's friend.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Nay, two or three turns, I'll take my oath.

MRS. FRAIL. Well, what if I took twenty?—I warrant if you had been there, it had been only innocent recreation.—Lord, where's the comfort of this life if we can't have the happiness of conversing where we like?

MRS. FORESIGHT. But can't you converse at home?—I own it, I think there's no happiness like conversing with an agreeable man; I don't quarrel at that, nor I don't think but your conversation was very innocent; but the place is public and to be seen with a man in a hackney-coach is scandalous; what if anybody else should have seen you alight, as I did?—How can anybody be happy, while they're in perpetual fear of being seen and censured?—Besides, it would not only reflect upon you, sister, but me.

MRS. FRAIL. Pooh, here's a clutter!—Why should it reflect upon you?—I don't doubt but you have thought yourself happy in a hackney-coach before now.—If I had gone to Knightsbridge, or to Chelsea, or to Spring Garden, or Barn Elms, with a man, alone, something might have been said.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Why, was I ever in any of those places? What do you mean, sister?

MRS. FRAIL. Was I? What do you mean?

MRS. FORESIGHT. You have been at a worse place.

MRS. FRAIL. I at a worse place, and with a man!

MRS. FORESIGHT. I suppose you would not go alone to the World's End.

MRS. FRAIL. The World's End! What, do you mean to banter me?

MRS. FORESIGHT. Poor innocent! You don't know that there's a place called the World's End? I'll swear you can keep your countenance purely; you'd make an admirable player.

MRS. FRAIL. I'll swear you have a great deal of confidence, and in my mind too much for the stage.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Very well, that will appear who has most; you never were at the World's End?

MRS. FRAIL. No.

MRS. FORESIGHT. You deny it positively to my face.

MRS. FRAIL. Your face, what's your face?

MRS. FORESIGHT. No matter for that, it's as good a face as yours.

MRS. FRAIL. Not by a dozen years wearing.—But I do deny it positively to your face then.

MRS. FORESIGHT. I'll allow you now to find fault with my face;—for I'll swear your impudence has put me out of countenance.—But look you here now—where did you lose this gold bodkin?—Oh, sister, sister!

MRS. FRAIL. My bodkin!

MRS. FORESIGHT. Nay, 'tis yours; look at it.

MRS. FRAIL. Well, if you go to that, where did you find this bodkin?—Oh sister, sister! sister every way.

MRS. FORESIGHT. O devil on't, that I could not discover her without betraying my self. [*Aside.*]

MRS. FRAIL. I have heard gentlemen say, sister; that one should take great care, when one makes a thrust in fencing, not to lie open one's self.

MRS. FORESIGHT. It's very true, sister; well, since all's out, and as you say, since we are both wounded, let us do what is often done in duels, take care of one another, and grow better friends than before.

MRS. FRAIL. With all my heart: ours are but slight flesh wounds, and if we keep 'em from air, not at all dangerous. Well, give me your hand in token of sisterly secrecy and affection.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Here 'tis, with all my heart.

MRS. FRAIL. Well, as an earnest of friendship and confidence, I'll acquaint you with a design that I have. To tell truth and speak openly one to another, I'm afraid the world have observed us more than we have observed one another. You have a rich husband, and are provided for; I am at a loss, and have no great stock either of fortune or reputation, and therefore must look sharply about me. Sir Sampson has a son that is expected to-night, and by the account I have heard of his education, can be no conjurer. The estate you know is to be made over to him—now if I could wheedle him, sister, ha? You understand me?

MRS. FORESIGHT. I do; and will help you to the utmost of my power.—And I can tell you one thing that falls out luckily enough; my awkward daughter-in-law, who you know is designed to be his wife, is grown fond of Mr. Tattle. Now, if we can improve that and make her have an aversion for the

booby, it may go a great way towards his liking you. Here they come together, and let us contrive some way or other to leave 'em together.

[*Enter TATTLE and MISS PRUE.*]

MISS PRUE. Mother, Mother, Mother, look you here.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Fie, fie, Miss! How you bawl.—Besides, I have told you, you must not call me “Mother.”

MISS PRUE. What must I call you then? Are you not my father's wife?

MRS. FORESIGHT. “Madam.” You must say “madam.”—By my soul, I shall fancy myself old, indeed, to have this great girl call me “mother.”—Well, but Miss, what are you so overjoyed at?

MISS PRUE. Look you here, madam then, what Mr. Tattle has given me.—Look you here Cousin, here's a Snuffbox; nay, there's snuff in't;—here, will you have any?—Oh, good! How sweet it is.—Mr. Tattle is all over sweet, his perruke is sweet, and his gloves are sweet—and his handkerchief is sweet . . . pure sweet, sweeter than roses.—Smell him, mother, madam, I mean. He gave me this ring for a kiss.

TATTLE. Oh, fie, Miss! You must not kiss and tell.

MISS PRUE. Yes, I may tell my Mother.—Oh pray lend me your handkerchief—smell, cousin; he says, he'll give me something that will make my smocks smell this way.—Is not it pure? It's better than lavender mun.—I'm resolved I won't let nurse put any more lavender among my smocks—ha, Cousin?

MRS. FRAIL. Fie, Miss! Amongst your linen, you must say—you must never say “smock.”

MISS PRUE. Why, it is not bawdy, is it, cousin?

TATTLE. Oh, Madam, you are too severe upon Miss. You must not find fault with her pretty simplicity; it becomes her strangely.—Pretty Miss, don't let 'em persuade you out of your innocence.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Oh, demm! You toad!—I wish you don't persuade her out of her innocence.

TATTLE. Who I, Madam?—Oh Lord how can your ladyship have such a thought—sure you don't know me?

MRS. FRAIL. O hang you; who'll believe you?—You'd be hanged before you'd confess—we know you—she's very pretty!—Lord, what pure red and white!—She looks so wholesome . . . I don't know, but I fancy, if I were a man—

MISS PRUE. How you love to jeer one, cousin.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Hark ye, sister. . . . D'ye think she'll ever endure a great lubberly tarpaulin?—Gad, I warrant you, she won't let him come near her, after Mr. Tattle.

MRS. FRAIL. O my Soul, I'm afraid not—eh!—filthy creature, that smells all of pitch and tar. [*To TATTLE.*]—Devil take you, you confounded toad!—Why did you see her, before she was married?

MRS. FORESIGHT. Nay, why did we let him?—My husband will hang us;—he'll think we brought 'em acquainted.

MRS. FRAIL. Come; faith, let us be gone—If my brother, Foresight, should find us with them, he'd think so, sure enough.

MRS. FORESIGHT. So he would—but then, leaving 'em together is as bad. . . .

MRS. FRAIL. I don't care; I won't be seen in't.

MRS. FORESIGHT. . . . I wash my hands of it; I'm thoroughly innocent. [*Exeunt MRS. FRAIL and MRS. FORESIGHT.*]

MISS PRUE. What makes 'em go away, Mr. Tattle? What do they mean, do you know?

TATTLE. Yes, my dear—I think I can guess. But hang me if I know the reason of it.

MISS PRUE. Come, must not we go too?

TATTLE. No, no, they don't mean that.

MISS PRUE. No! What then?

TATTLE. I must make love to you, pretty miss; will you let me make love to you?

MISS PRUE. Yes, if you please.

TATTLE. Frank, egad, at least. What a pox does Mrs. Foresight mean by this civility? Is it to make a fool of me?

. . . .

[*Aside.*]

MISS PRUE. Well, and how will you make love to me? . . . Must I make love too? You must tell me how.

TATTLE. You must let me speak, miss; you must not speak first. I must ask you questions, and you must answer.

MISS PRUE. Come, then, ask me.

TATTLE. D'ye think you can love me?

MISS PRUE. Yes.

TATTLE. Pooh! pox! You must not say yes already; I shan't care a farthing for you then in a twinkling.

MISS PRUE. What must I say, then?

TATTLE. Why you must say no, or you believe not, or you can't tell.

MISS PRUE. Why, must I tell a lie then?

TATTLE. Yes, if you'd be well-bred. All well-bred persons lie. Besides, you are a woman; you must never speak what you think. Your words must contradict your thoughts, but your actions may contradict your words. So, when I ask you, if you can love me, you must say no, but you must love me too. If I tell you you are handsome, you must deny it and say I flatter you. But you must think yourself more charming than I speak you, and like me for the beauty which I say you have, as much as if I had it myself. If I ask you to kiss me, you must be angry, but you must not refuse me. If I ask you for more, you must be more angry—but more complying. . . .

MISS PRUE. O Lord, I swear this is pure!—I like it better than our old-fashioned country way of speaking one's mind—and must not you lie, too?

TATTLE. Hum!—yes; but you must believe I speak truth.

MISS PRUE. O Gemini! Well, I always had a great mind to tell lies, but they frightened me, and said it was a sin.

TATTLE. Well, my pretty creature, will you make me happy by giving me a kiss?

MISS PRUE. No, indeed; I'm angry at you.

[*Runs and kisses him.*]

TATTLE. Hold, hold! That's pretty well—but you should not have given it me, but have suffered me to have taken it.

MISS PRUE. Well, we'll do it again.

TATTLE. With all my heart.—Now then, my little angel!
[*Kisses her.*]

MISS PRUE. Pish.

TATTLE. That's right—again, my charmer.
[*Kisses again.*]

MISS PRUE. Oh, fie. Nay, now I can't abide you.

TATTLE. Admirable! That was as well as if you had been born and bred in Covent Garden. And won't you show me, pretty miss, where your chamber is?

MISS PRUE. No, indeed won't I; but I'll run there and hide myself from you behind the curtains.

TATTLE. I'll follow you.

MISS PRUE. Ah, but I'll hold the door with both hands, and be angry. . . .

TATTLE. Oh, my dear apt scholar.

MISS PRUE. Well, now I'll run and make more haste than you.

TATTLE. You shall not fly so fast, as I'll pursue.

[*Exeunt MISS PRUE and TATTLE.*]

ACT III

[*Enter TATTLE and MISS PRUE.*]

MISS PRUE. O Lord, nurse is coming—and she'll tell my father. What shall I do now?

TATTLE. Pox take her. . . .

MISS PRUE. Oh dear! What shall I say? Tell me, Mr. Tattle, tell me a lie.

TATTLE. There's no occasion for a lie; I could never tell a lie to no purpose. Since we have done nothing, we must say nothing. I hear her—I'll leave you together, and come off as you can.
[*Thrusts her in, and shuts the door.*]

[*Enter VALENTINE, SCANDAL, and ANGELICA.*]

ANGELICA. You can't accuse me of inconstancy. I never told you that I loved you.

VALENTINE. But I can accuse you of uncertainty, for not telling me whether you did or not.

ANGELICA. You mistake indifference for uncertainty. I never had concern enough to ask myself the question.

SCANDAL. Nor good nature enough to answer him that did ask you. I'll say that for you, Madam.

ANGELICA. What, are you setting up for good nature?

SCANDAL. Only for the affectation of it, as the women do for ill nature.

ANGELICA. Persuade your friend that it is all affectation.

SCANDAL. I shall receive no benefit from the opinion; for I know no effectual difference between continued affectation and reality.

TATTLE [*coming up*]. Scandal, are you in private discourse? Anything of secrecy? [*Aside to SCANDAL.*]

SCANDAL. Yes, but I dare trust you; we were talking of Angelica's love for Valentine. You won't speak of it.

TATTLE. No, no, not a syllable.—I know that's a secret, for it's whispered everywhere.

SCANDAL. Ha, ha, ha!

ANGELICA. What is, Mr. Tattle? I heard you say something was whispered everywhere.

SCANDAL. Your love of Valentine.

ANGELICA. How!

TATTLE. No, madam, his love for your ladyship.—Gad take me, I beg your pardon—for I never heard a word of your ladyship's passion till this instant.

ANGELICA. My passion! And who told you of my passion, pray, sir?

SCANDAL. Why, is the devil in you? Did not I tell it you for a secret?

TATTLE. Gad so; but I thought she might have been trusted with her own affairs.

SCANDAL. Is that your discretion? Trust a woman with herself?

TATTLE. You say true. I beg your pardon—I'll bring all off. [*Aloud.*] It was impossible, madam, for me to imagine that a person of your ladyship's wit and gallantry could have

so long received the passionate addresses of the accomplished Valentine and yet remain insensible; therefore, you will pardon me if, from a just weight of his merit, with your ladyship's good judgment, I formed the balance of a reciprocal affection.

VALENTINE. Oh the devil! What damned costive poet has given thee this lesson of fustian to get by rote?

ANGELICA. I dare swear you wrong him. It is his own, and Mr. Tattle only judges of the success of others, from the effects of his own merit. For certainly, Mr. Tattle was never denied anything in his life.

TATTLE. O Lord! Yes, indeed, madam, several times.

ANGELICA. I swear I don't think 'tis possible.

TATTLE. Yes, I vow and swear I have. Lord, madam, I'm the most unfortunate man in the world, and the most cruelly used by the ladies.

ANGELICA. Nay, now you're ungrateful.

TATTLE. No, I hope not; 'tis as much ingratitude to own some favours, as to conceal others.

VALENTINE. There, now it's out.

ANGELICA. I don't understand you now. I thought you had never asked anything but what a lady might modestly grant, and you confess.

SCANDAL. So, faith, your business is done here; now you may go brag somewhere else.

TATTLE. Brag! Oh, Heavens! . . .

[Enter SIR SAMPSON, MRS. FRAIL, MISS PRUE, and servant.]

SIR SAMPSON. Is Ben come? Odso, my son Ben come? Odd, I'm glad on't, where is he? I long to see him. Now, Mrs. Frail, you shall see my son Ben.—Body o'me, he's the hopes of my family.—I han't seen him these three years.—I warrant he's grown.—Call him in; bid him make haste.—[Exit servant.] I'm ready to cry for joy.

MRS. FRAIL. Now, miss, you shall see your husband.

MISS PRUE [aside to MRS. FRAIL]. Pish, he shall be none of my husband.

MRS. FRAIL. Hush! Well, he shan't; leave that to me.—I'll beckon Mr. Tattle to us.

ANGELICA. Won't you stay and see your brother?

VALENTINE. We are the twin-stars, and cannot shine in one sphere; when he rises I must set. Besides, if I should stay, I don't know but my father in good nature may press me to the immediate signing the deed of conveyance of my estate, and I'll defer it as long as I can.—Well, you'll come to a resolution.

ANGELICA. I can't. Resolution must come to me, or I shall never have one.

SCANDAL. Come, Valentine, I'll go with you; I've something in my head to communicate to you.

[*Exeunt VALENTINE and SCANDAL.*]

SIR SAMPSON. What, is my son Valentine gone? What, is he sneaked off, and would not see his brother? There's an unnatural whelp! There's an ill-natured dog!—What, were you here too, madam, and could not keep him! Could neither love, nor duty, nor natural affection oblige him. Odsbud, madam, have no more to say to him; he is not worth your consideration. The rogue has not a drachm of generous love about him.—All interest, all interest. He's an undone scoundrel, and courts your estate. Body o'me, he does not care a doit for your person.

ANGELICA. I'm pretty even with him, Sir Sampson; for if ever I could have liked anything in him, it should have been his estate, too. But since that's gone, the bait's off and the naked hook appears.

SIR SAMPSON. Odsbud, well spoken and you are a wiser woman than I thought you were. . . .

ANGELICA. If I marry, Sir Sampson, I'm for a good estate with any man, and for any man with a good estate.—Therefore, if I were obliged to make a choice, I declare I'd rather have you than your son.

SIR SAMPSON. Faith and troth, you're a wise woman, and I'm glad to hear you say so. I was afraid you were in love with the reprobate; odd, I was sorry for you with all my heart. Hang him, mongrel; cast him off; you shall see the

rogue show himself, and make love to some desponding Cadua of four-score for sustenance. Odd, I love to see a young spendthrift forced to cling to an old woman for support, like ivy round a dead oak: faith, I do. I love to see 'em hug and cotten together, like down upon a thistle.

[*Enter BEN LEGEND and servant.*]

BEN. Where's Father?

SERVANT. There, sir; his back's towards you.

SIR SAMPSON. My son, Ben! Bless thee, my dear boy; body o'me, thou art heartily welcome.

BEN. Thank you, father, and I'm glad to see you.

SIR SAMPSON. Odsbud, and I'm glad to see thee! Kiss me, boy; kiss me again and again, dear Ben. [*Kisses him.*]

BEN. So, so! Enough father.—Mess, I'd rather kiss these gentlewomen.

SIR SAMPSON. And so thou shalt—Mrs. Angelica, my son Ben.

BEN. Forsooth, an you please.—[*Salutes her.*] Nay, Mistress, I'm not for dropping anchor here; about ship i-faith [*Kisses MRS. FRAIL.*] Nay, and you too, my little cock-boat—so [*Kisses Miss.*]

TATTLE. Sir, you're welcome ashore.

BEN. Thank you, thank you, friend.

SIR SAMPSON. Thou hast been many a weary league, Ben, since I saw thee.

BEN. Ey, ey, been! Been far enough, an that be all.—Well father, and how do all at home? How does brother Dick and brother Val?

SIR SAMPSON. Dick, body o'me! Dick has been dead these two years. I writ you word, when you were at Legorne.

BEN. Mess, that's true. Marry, I had forgot. Dick's dead as you say.—Well, and how? I have many questions to ask you. Well, you ben't married again, father, be you?

SIR SAMPSON. No, I intend you shall marry, Ben. I would not marry for thy sake.

BEN. Nay, what does that signify?—An you marry again—why then, I'll go to sea again, so there's one for t'other, an

that be all.—Pray don't let me be your hindrance; e'en marry a' God's name an the wind sit that way. As for my part, mayhap I have no mind to marry.

FRAIL. That would be pity, such a handsome young gentleman.

BEN. Handsome! he, he, he! Nay, forsooth, an you be for joking, I'll joke with you; for I love my jest, and the ship were sinking, as we say'n at sea. But I'll tell you why I don't much stand toward matrimony. I love to roam about from port to port, and from land to land. I could never abide to be port-bound, as we call it: Now a man that is married has, as it were, d'ye see, his feet in the bilboes, and mayhap mayn't get 'em out again when he would.

SIR SAMPSON. Ben's a wag.

BEN. A man that is married, d'ye see, is no more like another man, than a galley-slave is like one of us free sailors; he is chained to an oar all his life; and mayhap forced to tug a leaky vessel into the bargain.

SIR SAMPSON. A very wag, Ben's a very wag! . . . only a little tough; he wants a little polishing.

MRS. FRAIL. Not at all. I like his humour mightily, it's plain and honest I should like such a humour in a husband extremely.

BEN. Say'n you so, forsooth? Marry, and I should like such a handsome gentlewoman . . . hugely; how say you, mistress, would you like going to sea? Mess, you're a tight vessel, and well rigged. But I'll tell you one thing, an you come to sea in a high wind, or that, lady—you mayn't carry so much sail o'your head. Top and top—gallant, by the mess.

MRS. FRAIL. No, why so?

BEN. Why an you do, you may run the risk to be overset, and then you'll carry your keels above water, he! he! he!

ANGELICA. I swear, Mr. Benjamin is the veriest wag in nature . . . an absolute sea-wit.

SIR SAMPSON. Nay, Ben has parts, but as I told you before, they want a little polishing. You must not take anything ill, madam.

BEN. No, I hope the gentlewoman is not angry; I mean

all in good part: for if I give a jest, I'll take a jest: and so, forsooth, you may be as free with me.

ANGELICA. I thank you, sir, I am not at all offended.—But methinks Sir Sampson, you should leave him alone with his mistress. Mr. Tattle, we must not hinder lovers.

TATTLE [*aside to Miss*]. Well, Miss, I have your promise.

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, madam, you say true.—Look you, Ben, this is your mistress.—Come, miss, you must not be shamefaced; we'll leave you together.

MISS PRUE. I can't abide to be left alone; mayn't my cousin stay with me?

SIR SAMPSON. No, no. Come, let's away.

BEN. Look you, father, mayhap the young woman mayn't take a liking to me.

SIR SAMPSON. I warrant thee, boy; come, come, we'll be gone. I'll venture that.

[*Exeunt SIR SAMPSON, ANGELICA, TATTLE, and MRS. FRAIL.*]

BEN. Come, mistress, will you please to sit down? For an you stand astern a that'n, we shall never grapple together.—Come, I'll haul a chair; there, an you please to sit, I'll sit by you.

MISS PRUE. You need not sit so near me. If you have anything to say, I can hear you farther off. I an't deaf.

BEN. Why, that's true, as you say. Nor I an't dumb; I can hear as far as another—I'll heave off, to please you. [*Sits farther off.*] An we were a league asunder, I'd undertake to hold discourse with you, an 'twere not a main high wind, indeed, and full in my teeth. Look you, forsooth; I am as it were, bound for the land of matrimony. 'Tis a voyage, d'ye see, that was none of my seeking. I was commanded by father, and, if you like of it, mayhap I may steer into your harbour. How say you, mistress? The short of the thing is, that if you like me, and I like you, we may chance to swing in a hammock together.

MISS PRUE. I don't know what to say to you, nor I don't care to speak with you at all.

BEN. No, I'm sorry for that.—But pray why are you so scornful?

MISS PRUE. As long as one must not speak one's mind one had better not speak at all, I think; and truly I won't tell a lie for the matter.

BEN. Nay, you say true in that. 'Tis but a folly to lie. For to speak one thing, and to think just the contrary way, is, as it were, to look one way and row another. Now, for my part d'ye see, I'm for carrying things aboveboard; I'm not for keeping any thing under hatches—so that if you ben't as willing as I, say so, a' God's name! There's no harm done. Mayhap you may be shamefaced? Some maidens tho'f they love a man well enough, yet they don't care to tell'n so to's face: if that's the case, why, silence gives Consent.

MISS PRUE. But I'm sure it is not so, for I'll speak sooner than you should believe that; and I'll speak truth, though one should always tell a lie to a man; and I don't care, let my father do what he will—I'm too big to be whipped; so I'll tell you plainly I don't like you, nor love you at all—nor ever will, that's more! So, there's your answer for you; and don't trouble me no more, you ugly thing.

BEN. Look you, young woman; you may learn to give good words, however. I spoke you fair, d'ye see, and civil.—As for your love or your liking, I don't value it of a rope's end—and mayhap I like you as little as you do me.—What I said was in obedience to father; gad I fear a whipping no more than you do. But I tell you one thing, if you should give such language at sea, you'd have a cat-o'-nine-tails laid cross your shoulders. Flesh! Who are you? You heard t'other handsome young woman speak civilly to me, of her own accord: whatever you think of your self, gad, I don't think you are any more to compare to her, than a can of small beer to a bowl of punch.

MISS PRUE. Well, and there's a handsome gentleman, and a fine gentleman, and a sweet gentleman, that was here that loves me, and I love him; and if he sees you speak to me any more, he'll thrash your jacket for you he will—you great sea-calf!

BEN. What, do you mean that fair-weather spark that was here just now? Will he thrash my jacket?—Let'n—let'n.

But an he comes near me, mayhap I may giv'n a salt eel for's supper, for all that. What does father mean to leave me alone as soon as I come home, with such a dirty dowdy. Sea-calf? I an't calf enough to lick your chalked face, you cheese-curd, you——Marry thee? Oons, I'll marry a Lapland witch as soon, and live upon selling contrary winds, and wrecked vessels.

MISS PRUE. I won't be called names, nor I won't be abused thus—so I won't.—If I were a man——[cries] you durst not talk at this rate; no you durst not, you stinking tar-barrell!

[Enter MRS. FORESIGHT and MRS. FRAIL.]

MRS. FORESIGHT. They have quarreled just as we could wish.

BEN. Tar-barrel? Let your sweetheart there call me so, if he'll take your part, your Tom Essence, and I'll say something to him; gad, I'll lace his musk-douplet for him! . . .

MRS. FORESIGHT. Bless me, what's the matter, miss? What, does she cry?——Mr. Benjamin, what have you done to her?

BEN. Let her cry: the more she cries, the less she'll——she has been gathering foul weather in her mouth, and now it rains out at her eyes.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Come, miss, come along with me, and tell me, poor child.

MRS. FRAIL. Lord, what shall we do? There's my brother Foresight, and Sir Sampson coming. Sister, do you take miss down into the parlour, and I'll carry Mr. Benjamin into my chamber, for they must not know that they are fallen out.—Come, sir, will you venture yourself with me? [*Looking kindly on him.*]

BEN. Venture, mess, and that I will, though 'twere to sea in a storm.

[*Exeunt MRS. FORESIGHT with MISS, and MRS. FRAIL with BEN.*]

[Enter SIR SAMPSON and FORESIGHT.]

SIR SAMPSON. I left 'em together here; what are they gone? Ben's a brisk boy. He has got her into a corner, father's own son. . . .

FORESIGHT. Sir Sampson, we'll have the wedding to-morrow morning.

SIR SAMPSON. With all my heart.

FORESIGHT. At ten o'clock, punctually at ten.

SIR SAMPSON. To a minute, to a second; thou shall set thy watch, and the bridegroom shall observe its motions. . . .

[*Enter SCANDAL.*]

SCANDAL. Sir Sampson, sad news.

FORESIGHT. Bless us!

SIR SAMPSON. Why, what's the matter?

SCANDAL. Can't you guess at what ought to afflict you and him, and all of us, more than anything else?

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, I don't know any universal grievance, but a new tax, or the loss of the canary fleet. Without popery should be landed in the west, or the French fleet were at anchor at Blackwall.

SCANDAL. No! Undoubtedly Mr. Foresight knew all this, and might have prevented it.

FORESIGHT. 'Tis no earthquake!

SCANDAL. No, not yet; nor whirlwind. But we don't know what it may come to.—It has had a consequence already that touches us all.

SIR SAMPSON. Why, body o'me, out with't.

SCANDAL. Something has appeared to your son Valentine. —He's gone to bed upon't, and very ill.—He speaks little, yet he says he has a world to say. Asks for his father and the wise Foresight; talks of Raymond Lully, and the Ghost of Lilly. He has secrets to impart, I suppose, to you two. I can get nothing out of him but sighs. He desires he may see you in the morning, but would not be disturbed to-night because he has some business to do in a dream.

SIR SAMPSON. Hoity, toity, what have I to do with his dreams or his divinations? Body o'me, this is a trick to defer signing the conveyance. I warrant the devil will tell in a dream that he must not part with his estate. But I'll bring him a parson, to tell him that the devil's a liar—or if that won't do, I'll bring a lawyer that shall out-lie the devil. And

so I'll try whether my blackguard or his shall get the better of the day. [Exit SIR SAMPSON.]

SCANDAL. Alas, Mr. Foresight, I'm afraid all is not right. You are a wise man, and a conscientious man—a searcher into obscurity and futurity; and if you commit an error, it is with a great deal of consideration, and discretion, and caution.

FORESIGHT. Ah, good Mr. Scandal—

SCANDAL. Nay, nay, 'tis manifest; I do not flatter you. But Sir Sampson is hasty, very hasty; I'm afraid he is not scrupulous enough, Mr. Foresight. He has been wicked, and Heaven grant he may mean well in his affair with you. But my mind gives me, these things cannot be wholly insignificant. You are wise, and should not be overreached; methinks you should not—

FORESIGHT. Alas, Mr. Scandal! *Humanum est errare.*

SCANDAL. You say true, man will err; mere man will err—but you are something more. There have been wise men; but they were such as you—men who consulted the stars, and were observers of omens.—Solomon was wise, but how?—By his judgment in astrology: so says Pineda in his third book and eighth chapter.

FORESIGHT. You are learned, Mr. Scandal!

SCANDAL. A trifler—but a lover of art. And the wise men of the East owed their instruction to a star, which is rightly observed by Gregory the Great in favour of astrology! . . .

FORESIGHT. I protest I honour you, Mr. Scandal: I did not think you had been read in these matters, few young men are inclined—

SCANDAL. I thank my stars that have inclined me.—But I fear this marriage, and making over this estate, this transferring of a rightful inheritance, will bring judgments upon us. I prophesy it, and I would not have the fate of Cassandra, not to be believed. Valentine is disturbed; what can be the cause of that? And Sir Sampson is hurried on by an unusual violence.—I fear he does not act wholly from himself; methinks he does not look as he used to do.

FORESIGHT. He was always of an impetuous nature.—

But as to this marriage, I have consulted the stars, and all appearances are prosperous.

SCANDAL. Come, come, Mr. Foresight, let not the prospect of worldly lucre carry you beyond your judgment, nor against your conscience.—You are not satisfied that you act justly.

FORESIGHT. How?

SCANDAL. You are not satisfied, I say. I am loth to discourage you—but it is palpable that you are not satisfied.

FORESIGHT. How does it appear, Mr. Scandal? I think I am very well satisfied.

SCANDAL. Either you suffer yourself to deceive yourself, or you do not know yourself.

FORESIGHT. Pray explain yourself.

SCANDAL. Do you sleep well o' nights?

FORESIGHT. Very well.

SCANDAL. Are you certain? You do not look so.

FORESIGHT. I am in health, I think.

SCANDAL. So was Valentine this morning, and looked just so.

FORESIGHT. How! Am I altered any way? I don't perceive it.

SCANDAL. That may be, but your beard is longer than it was two hours ago.

FORESIGHT. Indeed! Bless me.

[Enter MRS. FORESIGHT.]

MRS. FORESIGHT. Husband, will you go to bed? It's ten o'clock. Mr. Scandal, your servant.

SCANDAL. Pox on her! She has interrupted my design: but I must work her into the project. [*Aloud.*] You keep early hours, madam.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Mr. Foresight is punctual; we sit up after him.

FORESIGHT. My dear, pray lend me your glass—your little looking-glass.

SCANDAL. Pray, lend it him, madam—I'll tell you the reason. [*She gives him the glass. SCANDAL and she whisper.*] My passion for you is grown so violent that I am no longer

master of myself.—I was interrupted in the morning, when you had charity enough to give me your attention, and I had hopes of finding another opportunity of explaining myself to you, but was disappointed all this day; and the uneasiness that has attended me ever since brings me now hither at this unseasonable hour.—

MRS. FORESIGHT. Was there ever such impudence! To make love to me before my husband's face? I swear I'll tell him.

SCANDAL. Do, I'll die a martyr rather than disclaim my passion. But come a little farther this way, and I'll tell you what project I had to get him out of the way, that I might have an opportunity of waiting upon you. [*Whisper.*]

FORESIGHT [*looking in the glass*]. I do not see any revolution here; methinks I look with a serene and benign aspect—pale, a little pale—but the roses of these cheeks have been gathered many years.—Ha! I do not like that sudden flushing—gone already!—hem, hem, hem! Faintish. My heart is pretty good; yet it beats; and my pulses, ha! I have none.—Mercy on me—hum—yes, here they are—gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop, hey! Whither will they hurry me?—Now they're gone again.—And now I'm faint again; and pale again, and hem! And my hem!—breath, hem!—grows short; hem! hem! He, he, hem!

SCANDAL. It takes; pursue it in the name of love and pleasure.

MRS. FORESIGHT. How do you do, Mr. Foresight?

FORESIGHT. Hum, not so well as I thought I was. Lend me your hand.

SCANDAL. Look you there now—your lady says your sleep has been unquiet of late.

FORESIGHT. Very likely.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Oh, mighty restless; but I was afraid to tell him so. He has been subject to talking and starting.

SCANDAL. And did not use to be so.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Never, never, till within these three nights; I cannot say that he has once broken my rest, since we have been married.

FORESIGHT. I will go to bed.

SCANDAL. Do so, Mr. Foresight, and say your prayers.—
He looks better than he did.

MRS. FORESIGHT [*calls*]. Nurse, Nurse!

FORESIGHT. Do you think so, Mr. Scandal?

SCANDAL. Yes, yes, I hope this will be gone by morning,
taking it in time.—

FORESIGHT. I hope so.

[*Enter NURSE.*]

MRS. FORESIGHT. Nurse, your master is not well; put him
to bed.

SCANDAL. I hope you will be able to see Valentine in the
morning. You had best take a little diacodion and cowslip
water, and lie upon your back; maybe you may dream.

FORESIGHT. I thank you Mr. Scandal, I will.—Nurse, let
me have a watch-light, and lay *The Crums of Comfort* by me.

NURSE. Yes, Sir.

FORESIGHT. And—hem, hem! I am very faint.

SCANDAL. No, no, you look much better.

FORESIGHT. Do I? . . . I hope neither the lord of my
ascendant, nor the moon will be combust; and then I may
do well.

SCANDAL. I hope so—leave that to me; I will erect a
scheme; and I hope I shall find both Sol and Venus in the
sixth house.

FORESIGHT. I thank you, Mr. Scandal; indeed, that would
be a great comfort to me. Hem, hem; good night.

[*Exit with NURSE.*]

MRS. FORESIGHT. Well, and what use do you hope to make
of this project? You don't think, that you are ever like to
succeed in your design upon me.

SCANDAL. Yes, faith I do; I have a better opinion both of
you and myself than to despair.

[*Exeunt MRS. FORESIGHT and SCANDAL.*]

[*Enter MRS. FRAIL and BEN.*]

BEN. Mess, I love to speak my mind; father has nothing to do with me.—Nay, I can't say that neither; he has something to do with me. But what does that signify? If so be, that I ben't minded to be steered by him: 'tis as tho'f he should strive against wind and tide.

MRS. FRAIL. Ay, but my dear, we must keep it secret, till the estate be settled; for you know, marrying without an estate is like sailing in a ship without ballast.

BEN. He, he, he; why that's true; just so for all the world it is indeed, as like as two cable-ropes.

MRS. FRAIL. And though I have a good portion,—you know one would not venture all in one bottom.

BEN. Why that's true again; for mayhap one bottom may spring a leak. You have hit it indeed, mess, you've nicked the channel.

MRS. FRAIL. Well, but if you should forsake me after all, you'd break my heart.

BEN. Break your heart? I'd rather the Marygold should break her cable in a storm, as well as I love her. Flesh! You don't think I'm false-hearted, like a land man. A sailor will be honest, tho'f mayhap he has never a penny of money in his pocket.—Mayhap I may not have so fair a face, as a citizen or a courtier; but for all that, I've as good blood in my veins, and a heart as sound as a biscuit.

MRS. FRAIL. And will you love me always?

BEN. Nay, an I love once, I'll stick like pitch; I'll tell you that.

.

ACT IV

SCENE—VALENTINE'S *lodging.*

[*SCANDAL and JEREMY discovered.*]

SCANDAL. Well, is your master ready; does he look madly, and talk madly?

JEREMY. Yes Sir; you need make no great doubt of that; he that was so near turning poet yesterday morning, can't be much to seek in playing the madman to-day.

SCANDAL. Would he have Angelica acquainted with the reason of his design?

JEREMY. No, sir, not yet. He has a mind to try whether his playing the madman won't make her play the fool, and fall in love with him, or at least own that she has loved him all this while and concealed it.

SCANDAL. I saw her take coach just now with her maid, and think I heard her bid the coachman drive hither.

JEREMY. Like enough, sir, for I told her maid this morning my master was run stark mad only for love of her mistress. I hear a coach stop; if it should be she, sir, I believe he would not see her till he hears how she takes it.

SCANDAL. Well, I'll try her. 'Tis she; here she comes.

[Enter ANGELICA with JENNY.]

ANGELICA. Mr. Scandal, I suppose you don't think it a novelty to see a woman visit a man at his own lodgings in a morning?

SCANDAL. Not upon a kind occasion, madam. But when a lady comes tyrannically to insult a ruined lover and make manifest the cruel triumphs of her beauty, the barbarity of it something surprizes me.

ANGELICA. I don't like raillery from a serious face. Pray tell me what is the matter?

JEREMY. No strange matter madam; my master's mad, that's all. I suppose your ladyship has thought him so a great while.

ANGELICA. How d'ye mean, mad?

JEREMY. Why, faith, madam, he's mad for want of his wits, just as he was poor for want of money. His head is e'en as light as his pockets, and anybody that has a mind to a bad bargain, can't do better than to beg him for his estate.

ANGELICA. If you speak truth, your endeavouring at wit is very unseasonable——

SCANDAL. She's concerned, and loves him. [Aside.]

ANGELICA. Mr. Scandal, you can't think me guilty of so

much inhumanity as not to be concerned for a man I must own myself obliged to; pray tell me the truth.

SCANDAL. Faith, madam, I wish telling a lie would mend the matter. But this is no new effect of an unsuccessful passion.

ANGELICA [*aside*]. I know not what to think.—Yet I should be vexed to have a trick put upon me.—[*Aloud.*] May I not see him?

SCANDAL. I'm afraid the physician is not willing you should see him yet.—Jeremy, go in and enquire.

[*Exit JEREMY.*]

ANGELICA [*aside*]. Ha! I saw him wink and smile—I fancy 'tis a trick—I'll try.—[*Aloud.*] I would disguise to all the world a failing, which I must own to you.—I fear my happiness depends upon the recovery of Valentine. Therefore I conjure you, as you are his friend, and as you have compassion upon one fearful of affliction, to tell me what I am to hope for.—I cannot speak—but you may tell me, for you know what I would ask?

SCANDAL [*aside*]. So! This is pretty plain.—[*Aloud.*] Be not too much concerned, madam; I hope his condition is not desperate. An acknowledgement of love from you, perhaps, may work a cure, as the fear of your aversion occasioned his distemper.

ANGELICA [*aside*]. Say you so? Nay, then I'm convinced; and if I don't play trick for trick, may I never taste the pleasure of revenge!—[*Aloud.*] Acknowledgement of love! I find you have mistaken my compassion, and think me guilty of a weakness I am a stranger to. But I have too much sincerity to deceive you, and too much charity to suffer him to be deluded with vain hopes. Good nature and humanity oblige me to be concerned for him, but to love is neither in my power nor inclination. And if he can't be cured without I suck the poison from his wounds, I'm afraid he won't recover his senses till I lose mine.

SCANDAL [*aside*]. Hey, brave woman, i'faith!—[*Aloud.*] Won't you see him then, if he desire it?

ANGELICA. What signify a madman's desires? Besides,

'twould make me uneasy. If I don't see him, perhaps my concern for him may lessen. If I forget him, 'tis no more than he has done by himself; and now the surprize is over, methinks I am not half so sorry as I was.

SCANDAL. So! Faith, good nature works apace; you were confessing just now an obligation to his love.

ANGELICA. But I have considered that passions are unreasonable and involuntary. If he loves, he can't help it; and if I don't love, I can't help it——no more than he can help his being a man, or I my being a woman; or no more than I can help my want of inclination to stay longer here.—Come, Jenny.

[*Exeunt ANGELICA and JENNY.*]

SCANDAL. Humh!—An admirable composition, faith, this same womankind!

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

JEREMY. What, is she gone, sir?

SCANDAL. Gone? Why, she was never here; nor anywhere else; nor I don't know her if I see her, nor you neither.

JEREMY. Good lack! What's the matter now? Are any more of us to be mad? Why, sir, my master longs to see her, and is almost mad in good earnest, with the joyful news of her being here.

SCANDAL. We are all under a mistake. Ask no questions, for I can't resolve you; but I'll inform your master. In the meantime, if our project succeed no better with his father than it does with his mistress, he may descend from his exaltation of madness into the road of common sense, and be content only to be made a fool with other reasonable people. I hear Sir Sampson. You know your cue; I'll to your master.

[*Exit SCANDAL.*]

[*Enter SIR SAMPSON LEGEND, with a LAWYER.*]

SIR SAMPSON. D'ye see, Mr. Buckram, here's the paper signed with his own hand.

BUCKRAM. Good, sir. And the conveyance is ready drawn in this box, if he be ready to sign and seal.

SIR SAMPSON. Ready, body o'me, he must be ready! His sham-sickness shan't excuse him.—Oh, here's his scoundrel. [To JEREMY.] Sirrah, where's your master?

JEREMY. Ah, sir, he's quite gone.

SIR SAMPSON. Gone! What, he is not dead?

JEREMY. No, sir, not dead.

SIR SAMPSON. What, is he gone out of town? Run away, ha! Has he tricked me? Speak, varlet.

JEREMY. No, no, sir; he's safe enough, sir, an he were but as sound, poor gentleman. He is, indeed, here, sir—and not here, sir.

SIR SAMPSON. Heyday, rascal, do you banter me? Sirrah, d'ye banter me?—Speak, sirrah, where is he? For I will find him.

JEREMY. Would you could, sir! For he has lost himself. Indeed, sir, I have almost broke my heart about him—I can't refrain tears when I think of him, sir. I'm as melancholy for him as a passing-bell, sir; or a horse in a pound.

SIR SAMPSON. A pox confound your similitudes, sir!—Speak to be understood, and tell me in plain terms what the matter is with him, or I'll crack your fool's skull.

JEREMY. Ah, you've hit it, sir! That's the matter with him, sir. His skull's cracked, poor gentleman; he's stark mad, sir.

SIR SAMPSON. Mad!

BUCKRAM. What, is he *non compos*?

JEREMY. Quite *non compos*, sir.

BUCKRAM. Why then all's obliterated, Sir Sampson, if he be *non compos mentis*, his act and deed will be of no effect. It is not good in law.

SIR SAMPSON. Oons, I won't believe it! Let me see him, sir—Mad! I'll make him find his senses.

JEREMY. Mr. Scandal is with him, sir; I'll knock at the door.

[Goes to the scene, which opens and shows VALENTINE upon a couch, disorderly dressed, with SCANDAL beside him.]

SIR SAMPSON. How now, what's here to do?

VALENTINE [*starting*]. Ha! Who's that?

SCANDAL. For heaven's sake, softly, sir, and gently! Don't provoke him.

VALENTINE. Answer me! Who is that—and that?

SIR SAMPSON. Gads bobs, does he not know me? Is he mischievous? I'll speak gently. [*Aloud.*] Val, Val, dost thou not know me, boy? Not know thy own father, Val? I am thy own father, and this is honest Brief Buckram, the lawyer.

VALENTINE. It may be so—I did not know you—the world is full.—There are people that we do know, and people that we do not know; and yet the sun shines upon all alike.—There are fathers that have many children; and there are children that have many fathers—'tis strange! But I am Truth, and come to give the world the lie.

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, I know not what to say to him.

VALENTINE. Why does that lawyer wear black?—Does he carry his conscience withoutside?—Lawyer, what art thou? Dost thou know me?

BUCKRAM. O Lord, what must I say?—Yes, Sir.

VALENTINE. Thou liest, for I am Truth. 'Tis hard I cannot get a livelihood amongst you. I have been sworn out of Westminster Hall the first day of every term—let me see—no matter how long—but I'll tell you one thing; it's a question that would puzzle an arithmetician, if you should ask him, whether the Bible saves more souls in Westminster Abbey, or damns more in Westminster Hall. For my part, I am Truth, and can't tell; I have very few acquaintance.

SIR SAMPSON. Body o'me, he talks sensibly in his madness! Has he no intervals?

JEREMY. Very short, sir.

BUCKRAM. Sir, I can do you no service while he's in this condition. Here's your paper, sir—he may do me a mischief if I stay—the conveyance is ready, sir, if he recovers his senses. [*Exit BUCKRAM.*]

SIR SAMPSON. Hold, hold! Don't you go yet!

SCANDAL. You'd better let him go, sir, and send for him if

there be occasion; for I fancy his presence provokes him more.

VALENTINE. Is the lawyer gone? 'Tis well; then we may drink about without going together by the ears. Heigh-ho! What o'clock is't? My father here! Your blessing, sir?

SIR SAMPSON. He recovers.—Bless thee, Val. . . . how dost thou do, boy?

VALENTINE. Thank you, sir pretty well—I have been a little out of order; won't you please to sit, sir?

SIR SAMPSON. Aye, boy.—Come, thou shalt sit down by me.

VALENTINE. Sir, 'tis my duty to wait.

SIR SAMPSON. No, no, come, come, sit thee down, honest Val; how dost thou do? Let me feel thy pulse.—Oh, pretty well now, Val; body o'me. I was sorry to see thee indisposed! But I'm glad thou art better, honest Val.

VALENTINE. I thank you, sir.

SCANDAL [*aside*]. Miracle! The monster grows loving.

SIR SAMPSON. Let me feel thy hand again, Val; it does not shake—I believe thou canst write, Val. Ha, boy, thou canst write thy name, Val? [*To JEREMY.*] Jeremy, step and overtake Mr. Buckram; bid him make haste back with the conveyance! Quick—quick!

[*Exit JEREMY.*]

SCANDAL [*aside*]. That ever I should suspect such a heathen of any remorse!

SIR SAMPSON. Dost thou know this paper, Val? I know thou'rt honest, and wilt perform articles.

[*Shows him the paper, but holds it out of his reach.*]

VALENTINE. Pray, let me see it, sir. You hold it so far off, that I can't tell whether I know it or no.

SIR SAMPSON. See it, boy? Aye, aye, why thou dost see it—'tis thy own hand, Val. Why let me see, I can read it as plain as can be; look you here. [*Reads.*] "The condition of this obligation" . . . look you, as plain as can be, so it begins; and then at the bottom—"as witness my hand, Valentine Legend," in great letters. Why, 'tis as plain as the nose in one's face. What, are my eyes better than thine? I

believe I can read it farther off yet—let me see. [*Stretches his arm as far as he can.*]

VALENTINE. Will you please let me hold it, sir?

SIR SAMPSON. Let thee hold it, sayst thou?—Aye, with all my heart.—What matter is it who holds it? What need anybody hold it?—I'll put it up in my pocket, Val, and then nobody need hold it. [*Puts the paper in his pocket.*] There, Val, it's safe enough, boy—but thou shalt have it as soon as thou hast set thy hand to another paper, little Val.

[*Enter JEREMY, with BUCKRAM.*]

VALENTINE. What, is my bad genius here again? Oh, no, 'tis the lawyer with his itching palm; and he's come to be scratched. My nails are not long enough—let me have a pair of red-hot tongs quickly, quickly! You shall see me act St. Dunston, and lead the devil by the nose.

BUCKRAM. O Lord, let me be gone! I'll not venture myself with a madman.

[*Exit BUCKRAM.*]

VALENTINE. Ha, ha, ha! You need not run so fast. Honesty will not overtake you—ha, ha, ha! The rogue found me out to be *in forma pauperis* presently.

SIR SAMPSON. Oons! What a vexation is here! I know not what to do, or say, nor which way to go.

VALENTINE. Who's that, that's out of his way?—I am Truth, and can set him right.—Hark ye, friend, the straight road is the worst way you can go. . . . But what are you for? religion or politics? There's a couple of topics for you, no more like one another than oil and vinegar; and yet those two beaten together by a state-cook, make sauce for the whole nation.

SIR SAMPSON. What the devil had I to do, ever to beget sons? Why did I ever marry?

VALENTINE. Because thou wert a monster, old boy. The two greatest monsters in the world are a man and a woman! What's thy opinion?

SIR SAMPSON. Why, my opinion is that those two monsters

joined together make yet a greater . . . that's a man and his wife.

VALENTINE. Aha! Old truepenny, sayst thou so? Thou hast nicked it.—[*Aside to JEREMY.*] But it's wonderful strange, Jeremy.

JEREMY. What is, sir?

VALENTINE. That gray hairs should cover a green head and I make a fool of my father. What's here! *Erra Pater*, or a bearded Sybil? If Prophecy comes, Truth must give place.

[*Exeunt VALENTINE with JEREMY.*]

[*Enter FORESIGHT, MRS. FORESIGHT, and MRS. FRAIL.*]

FORESIGHT. What says he? What, did he prophesy? Ha, Sir Sampson, bless us! How are we?

SIR SAMPSON. Are we! A pox o'your prognostication.—Why, we are fools as we used to be.—Oons, that you could not foresee, that the moon would predominate, and my son be mad! . . . [Exit SIR SAMPSON.]

FORESIGHT. Ah, Sir Sampson, Heaven help your head! This is none of your lucky hour. What, is he gone, and in contempt of science! Ill stars, and unconvertible ignorance attend him.

SCANDAL. You must excuse his passion, Mr. Foresight; for he has been heartily vexed. His son is *non compos mentis*, and thereby incapable of making any conveyance in law; so that all his measures are disappointed.

FORESIGHT. Ha! say you so?

MRS. FRAIL [*aside to Mrs. Foresight*]. What has my sea-lover lost his anchor of hope then?

MRS. FORESIGHT. Oh sister, what will you do with him?

MRS. FRAIL. Do with him! Send him to sea again in the next foul weather.—He's used to an inconstant element and won't be surprized to see the tide turned.

FORESIGHT [*considering*]. Wherein was I mistaken, not to foresee this?

SCANDAL [*to Foresight*]. Well, Mr. Foresight!

FORESIGHT. Truly Mr. Scandal, I was so taken up with broken dreams and distracted visions, that I remember little.

SCANDAL. But would you not talk with Valentine? Perhaps you may understand him. I'm apt to believe there is something mysterious in his discourses, and sometimes rather think him inspired than mad.

FORESIGHT. You speak with singular good judgment, Mr. Scandal, truly.—I am inclining to your Turkish opinion in this matter, and do reverence a man whom the vulgar think mad. Let us go to him.

[*Exeunt FORESIGHT and SCANDAL.*]

MRS. FRAIL. Sister, do you go with them; I'll find out my lover and give him his discharge, and come to you.—O' my conscience; here he comes!

[*Exit MRS. FORESIGHT.*]

[*Enter BEN.*]

BEN. All mad, I think.—Flesh, I believe all the Calentures of the sea are come ashore, for my part.

MRS. FRAIL. Mr. Benjamin in choler!

BEN. No, I'm pleased well enough, now I have found you.—Mess, I have had such a hurricane upon your account yonder.—

MRS. FRAIL. My account! Pray, what's the matter?

BEN. Why, father came and found me squabbling with yon chitty-faced thing as he would have me marry—so he asked what was the matter. He asked in a surly sort of a way. It seems brother Val is gone mad, and so that put'n into a passion; but what did I know of that? What's that to me? So he asked in a surly sort of manner—and gad, I answered 'en as surlily. What tho'f he be my father? I an't bound prentice to 'en. So, faith, I told'n in plain terms, if I were minded to marry, I'd marry to please myself, not him; and for the young woman that he provided for me, I thought it more fitting for her to learn for sampler and make dirt-pies, than to look after a husband; for my part I was none of her man.—I had another voyage to make, let him take it as he will.

MRS. FRAIL. So then, you intend to go to sea again?

BEN. Nay, nay, my mind run upon you—but I would not tell him so much. So he said he'd make my heart ache, and if so be that he could get a woman to his mind, he'd marry himself. Gad, says I, an you play the fool and marry at these years, there's more danger of your head's aching than my heart.—He was woundy angry when I gav'n that wipe. He hadn't a word to say, and so I left'n and the green girl together. Mayhap the bee may bite, and he'll marry her himself—with all my heart.

MRS. FRAIL. And were you this undutiful and graceless wretch to your father?

BEN. Then why was he graceless first?—If I am undutiful and graceless, why did he beget me so? I did not get myself.

MRS. FRAIL. Oh, impiety! How have I been mistaken! What an inhuman merciless creature have I set my heart upon? Oh, I am happy to have discovered the shelves and quicksands that lurk beneath that faithless smiling face.

BEN. Hey, toss? What's the matter now? Why, you ben't angry, be you?

MRS. FRAIL. Oh, see me no more! For thou wert born amongst rocks, suckled by whales, cradled in a tempest, and whistled to by winds; and thou art come forth with fins and scales, and three rows of teeth, . . . a most outrageous fish of prey.

BEN. O Lord, O Lord! She's mad, poor young woman, love has turned her senses; her brain is quite upset. Well-aday, how shall I do to set her to rights?

MRS. FRAIL. No, no, I am not mad, monster, I am wise enough to find you out. Hadst thou the impudence to aspire at being a husband, with that stubborn and disobedient temper?—You that know not how to submit to a father presume to have a sufficient stock of duty to undergo a wife? I should have been finely fobbed indeed . . . very finely fobbed.

BEN. Hark ye, forsooth—if so be that you are in your right senses, d'ye see. For ought as I perceive, I'm like to be

finely fobbed—if I have got anger here upon your account, and you are tacked about already.—What d'ye mean, after all your fair speeches, and stroking my cheeks, and kissing and hugging—what, would you sheer off so? Would you, and leave me aground?

MRS. FRAIL. No, I'll leave you adrift, and go which way you will.

BEN. What, are you false-hearted, then?

MRS. FRAIL. Only the wind's changed.

BEN. More shame for you—the wind's changed? It's an ill wind blows nobody good—mayhap I have a good rid-dance on you, if these be your tricks. What did you mean all this while—to make a fool of me?

MRS. FRAIL. Any fool but a husband.

BEN. Husband! Gad, I would not be your husband if you would have me, now I know your mind, tho'f you had your weight in gold and jewels and tho'f I loved you never so well.

MRS. FRAIL. Why, canst thou love, porpoise?

BEN. No matter what I can do. Don't call names—I don't love you so well as to bear that, whatever I did. I'm glad you show yourself, mistress.—Let them marry you as don't know you—Gad, I know you too well, by sad experience! I believe he that marries you will go to sea in a hen-pecked frigate—I believe that, young woman—and mayhap may come to an anchor at Cuckold's-point; so there's a dash for you, take it as you will. Mayhap you may holla after me when I won't come, too.

[Exit BEN.]

MRS. FRAIL. Ha, ha, ha! No doubt on't. [Sings.] *My true love is gone to sea—*

[Enter MRS. FORESIGHT.]

MRS. FRAIL. O sister, had you come a minute sooner, you would have seen the resolution of a lover! Honest Tar and I are parted and with the same indifference that we met. O' my life I am half vexed at the insensibility of a brute that I despised.

MRS. FORESIGHT. What! Then he bore it most heroically?

MRS. FRAIL. Most tyrannically—for you see he has got the start of me, and I, the poor forsaken maid, am left complaining on the shore. But I'll tell you a hint that he has given me; Sir Sampson is enraged, and talks desperately of committing matrimony himself. If he has a mind to throw himself away, he can't do it more effectually than upon me, if we could bring it about.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Oh hang him, old fox! He's too cunning; besides, he hates both you and me. But I have a project in my head for you, and I have gone a good way towards it. I have almost made a bargain with Jeremy, Valentine's man, to sell his master to us.

MRS. FRAIL. Sell him! How?

MRS. FORESIGHT. Valentine raves upon Angelica, and took me for her, and Jeremy says will take anybody for her that he imposes on him. Now I have promised him mountains, if in one of the mad fits he will bring you to him in her stead, and get you married together. . . . And if he should recover his senses, he'll be glad at least to make you a good settlement.—Here they come: stand aside a little, and tell me how you like the design.

[They withdraw apart.]

[Enter SCANDAL, FORESIGHT, and JEREMY.]

SCANDAL *[to JEREMY]*. And have you given your master a hint of their plot upon him?

JEREMY. Yes, sir; he says he'll favour it, and mistake her for Angelica.

SCANDAL. It may make us sport.

FORESIGHT. Mercy on us!

VALENTINE. Hush—interrupt me not; I'll whisper prediction to thee, and thou shalt prophesy: I am Truth, and can teach thy tongue a new trick: I have told thee what's past—now I'll tell what's to come: Dost thou know what will happen to-morrow? Answer me not—for I will tell thee. To-morrow, knaves will thrive through craft and fools through fortune, and honesty will go as it did, frost-nipped in a

summer suit. Ask me questions concerning to-morrow?

SCANDAL. Ask him, Mr. Foresight.

FORESIGHT. Pray what will be done at Court?

VALENTINE. Scandal will tell you: I am Truth; I never come there.

FORESIGHT. In the city?

VALENTINE. Oh, prayers will be said in empty churches, at the usual hours. Yet you will see such zealous faces behind counters, as if religion were to be sold in every shop. Oh, things will go methodically in the city; the clocks will strike twelve at noon, and the horned herd buzz in the Exchange at two. Wives and husbands will drive distinct trades, and care and pleasure separately occupy the family. Coffee-houses will be full of smoke and stratagem. . . . Are you a husband?

FORESIGHT. I am married.

VALENTINE. Poor Creature! Is your wife of Covent Garden Parish?

FORESIGHT. No! St. Martin's-in-the-fields.

VALENTINE. Alas, poor man! His eyes are sunk, and his hands shrivelled—his legs dwindled, and his back bowed. Pray, pray, for a metamorphosis. Change thy shape and shake off age; get thee Medea's kettle and be boiled anew; come forth with laboring callous hands, a chine of steel, and Atlas shoulders. Let Taliacotius trim the calves of twenty chairmen and make thee pedestals to stand erect upon and look matrimony in the face. Ha, ha, ha! . . .

FORESIGHT. His frenzy is very high now, Mr. Scandal.

SCANDAL. I believe it is at spring-tide.

FORESIGHT. Very likely, truly; you understand these matters—Mr. Scandal, I shall be very glad to confer with you about these things which he has uttered.—His sayings are very mysterious and hieroglyphical.

VALENTINE. Oh, why should Angelica be absent from my eyes so long?

JEREMY. She's here, sir.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Now, sister.

MRS. FRAIL. O Lord, what must I say?

SCANDAL. Humour him, madam, by all means.

VALENTINE. Where is she? Oh, I see her—she comes, like riches, health, and liberty at once, to a despairing, starving, and abandoned wretch. Oh, welcome, welcome!

MRS. FRAIL. How d'ye do, sir? Can I serve you?

VALENTINE. Hark ye—I have a secret to tell you. Endymion and the moon shall meet us upon Mount Latmos, and we'll be married in the dead of night. But say not a word. Hymen shall put his torch into a dark lanthorn, that it may be secret; and Juno shall give her peacock poppy-water, that he may fold his ogling tail, and Argus's hundred eyes be shut. Ha! Nobody shall know, but Jeremy.

MRS. FRAIL. No, no! We'll keep it secret; it shall be done presently.

VALENTINE. The sooner the better—Jeremy, come hither—closer—that none may overhear us. Jeremy, I can tell you news; Angelica is turned nun, and I am turning friar . . . Get me a cowl and beads, that I may play my part; for she'll meet me two hours hence in black and white, and a long veil to cover the project, and we won't see one another's faces. . . .

[*Enter TATTLE and ANGELICA.*]

JEREMY. I'll take care, and—

VALENTINE. Whisper.

ANGELICA. Nay, Mr. Tattle, if you make love to me, you spoil my design, for I intend to make you my confident.

TATTLE. But, madam, to throw away your person—such a person, and such a fortune—on a madman!

ANGELICA. I never loved him till he was mad; but don't tell anybody so.

SCANDAL. How's this! Tattle making love to Angelica!

TATTLE. Tell, madam! Alas you don't know me—I have much ado to tell your ladyship how long I have been in love with you; but encouraged by the impossibility of Valentine's making any more addresses to you, I have ventured to declare the very inmost passion of my heart. Oh, madam, look upon us both. There you see the ruins of a poor decayed creature—here, a complete and lively figure, with youth

and health, and all his five senses in perfection, madam—and to all this the most passionate lover——

ANGELICA. O, fie for shame! Hold your tongue! A passionate lover, and five senses in perfection! When you are as mad as Valentine, I'll believe you love me, and the maddest shall take me.

VALENTINE. It is enough. Ha! Who's here?

FRAIL [*to JEREMY*]. O Lord, her coming will spoil all.

JEREMY. No, no, madam, he won't know her; if he should, I can persuade him.

VALENTINE. Scandal, who are these? Foreigners? If they are, I'll tell you what I think. [*Whispers.*] Get away all the company but Angelica, that I may discover my design to her.

SCANDAL [*whispering*]. I will; I have discovered something of Tattle, that is of a piece with Mrs. Frail. He courts Angelica; if we could contrive to couple 'em together. Hark ye!

MRS. FORESIGHT. He won't know you, cousin; he knows nobody.

FORESIGHT. But he knows more than anybody.—Oh, niece, he knows things past and to come, and all the profound secrets of time.

TATTLE. Look you, Mr. Foresight, it is not my way to make many words of matters, and so I shan't say much; but in short, d'ye see, I will hold you a hundred pounds now, that I know more secrets than he.

FORESIGHT. How! I cannot read that knowledge in your face, Mr. Tattle. Pray, what do you know?

TATTLE. Why, d'ye think I'll tell you, sir! Read it in my face! No, sir, 'tis written in my heart; and safer there, sir, than letters writ in juice of lemon, for no fire can fetch it out. I am no blab, sir.

VALENTINE. Acquaint Jeremy with it; he may easily bring it about. They are welcome, and I'll tell 'em so myself. [*To SCANDAL.*] What, do you look strange upon me? Then I must be plain. [*Coming up to them.*] I am Truth, and hate an old acquaintance with a new face.

[*SCANDAL goes aside with JEREMY.*]

TATTLE. Do you know me, Valentine?

VALENTINE. You? Who are you? No, I hope not.

TATTLE. I am Jack Tattle, your friend.

VALENTINE. My friend? What to do? I am no married man, and thou canst not make love to my wife: I am very poor, and thou canst not borrow money of me: then what employment have I for a friend?

TATTLE. Hah! A good open speaker, and not to be trusted with a secret.

ANGELICA. Do you know me, Valentine?

VALENTINE. Oh very well.

ANGELICA. Who am I?

VALENTINE. You're a woman—one to whom Heaven gave beauty, when it grafted roses on a briar. You are the reflection of Heaven in a pond, and he that leaps at you is sunk. You are all white, a sheet of lovely spotless paper, when you first are born; but you are to be scrawled and blotted by every goose's quill. I know you; for I loved a woman, and loved her so long that I found out a strange thing: I found out what a woman was good for.

TATTLE. Ay, prithee, what's that?

VALENTINE. Why, to keep a secret.

TATTLE. Oh, Lord!

VALENTINE. Oh, exceeding good to keep a secret. For though she should tell, yet she is not to be believed.

TATTLE. Hah! Good again, faith.

.

JEREMY [*to* SCANDAL]. I'll do it, sir.

SCANDAL. Mr. Foresight, we had best leave him. He may grow outrageous, and do mischief.

FORESIGHT. I will be directed by you.

JEREMY [*to* MRS. FRAIL]. You'll meet, madam? I'll take care everything shall be ready.

MRS. FRAIL. Thou shalt do what thou wilt; in short, I will deny thee nothing.

TATTLE [*to* ANGELICA]. Madam, shall I wait upon you?

ANGELICA. No, I'll stay with him; Mr. Scandal will protect

me. Aunt, Mr. Tattle desires you would give him leave to wait on you.

TATTLE. Pox on't! There's no coming off, now she has said that—[*Aloud.*] Madam, will you do me the honor?

MRS. FORESIGHT. Mr. Tattle might have used less ceremony.

[*Exeunt FORESIGHT, MRS. FRAIL, MRS. FORESIGHT, and TATTLE.*]

SCANDAL. Jeremy, follow Tattle.

ANGELICA. Mr. Scandal, I only stay till my maid comes, and because I had a mind to be rid of Mr. Tattle.

SCANDAL. Madam, I am very glad that I overheard a better reason, which you gave to Mr. Tattle; for his impertinence forced you to acknowledge a kindness for Valentine, which you denied to all his sufferings and my solicitations. So I'll leave him to make use of the discovery, and your ladyship to the free confession of your inclinations.

ANGELICA. Oh, Heavens! You won't leave me alone with a madman?

SCANDAL. No, madam, I only leave a madman to his remedy.

[*Exit SCANDAL.*]

VALENTINE. Madam, you need not be very much afraid, for I fancy I begin to come to myself.

ANGELICA [*aside*]. Aye, but if I don't fit you, I'll be hanged.

VALENTINE. You see what disguises love makes us put on; gods have been in counterfeited shapes for the same reason; and the divine part of me, my mind, has worn this masque of madness, and this motley livery, only as the slave of love, and menial creature of your beauty.

ANGELICA. Mercy on me, how he talks! Poor Valentine!

VALENTINE. Nay, faith, now let us understand one another, hypocrisy apart. The comedy draws toward an end, and let us think of leaving acting, and be ourselves; and since you have loved me, you must own, I have at length deserved you should confess it.

ANGELICA [*sighs*]. I would I had loved you—for Heaven

knows I pity you; and could I have foreseen the bad effects, I would have striven. But that's too late. [*Sighs.*]

VALENTINE. What sad effects?—What's too late? My seeming madness has deceived my father, and procured me time to think of means to reconcile me to him, and preserve the right of my inheritance to his estate; which otherwise by articles, I must this morning have resigned: and this I had informed you of to-day, but you were gone before I knew you had been here.

ANGELICA. How! I thought your love of me had caused this transport in your soul, which, it seems, you only counterfeited for mercenary ends and sordid interest!

VALENTINE. Nay, now you do me wrong; for if any interest was considered it was yours, since I thought I wanted more than love to make me worthy of you.

ANGELICA. Then you thought me mercenary.—But how am I deluded by this interval of sense, to reason with a madman!

VALENTINE. Oh, 'tis barbarous to misunderstand me longer.

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

ANGELICA. Oh, here's a reasonable creature—sure he will not have the impudence to persevere. Come, Jeremy, acknowledge your trick, and confess your master's madness counterfeit.

JEREMY. Counterfeit, madam! I'll maintain him to be as absolutely and substantially mad as any freeholder in Bethlehem. Nay, he's as mad as any projector, fanatic, chemist, lover, or poet in Europe.

VALENTINE. Sirrah, you lie! I am not mad.

ANGELICA. Ha, ha, ha, ha! You see he denies it.

JEREMY. O Lord, madam, did you ever know any madman mad enough to own it?

VALENTINE. Sot, can't you apprehend?

ANGELICA. Why he talked very sensibly just now.

JEREMY. Yes, madam, he has intervals: but you see he begins to look wild again now.

VALENTINE. Why you thick-skulled rascal, I tell you the farce is done, and I will be mad no longer. [*Beats him.*]

ANGELICA. Ha, ha, ha! Is he mad, or no, Jeremy?

JEREMY. Partly, I think—for he does not know his own mind two hours. I'm sure I left him just now in the humour to be mad, and I think I have not found him very quiet at this present. [*One knocks.*] Who's there?

VALENTINE. Go see, you sot. [*Exit JEREMY.*] I'm very glad that I can move your mirth, though not your compassion.

ANGELICA. I did not think you had apprehension enough to be exceptious. But madmen show themselves most by over-pretending to a sound understanding, as drunken men do by over-acting sobriety. I was half inclining to believe you, till I accidentally touched upon your tenderpart: but now you have restored me to my former opinion and compassion.

JEREMY [*entering*]. Sir, your father has sent to know if you are any better yet.—Will you please to be mad, sir, or how?

VALENTINE. Stupidity? You know the penalty of all I'm worth must pay for the confession of my senses. I'm mad, and will be mad to everybody but this lady.

JEREMY. So! Just the very backside of truth. But lying is a figure in speech, that interlards the greatest part of my conversation. Madam, your ladyship's woman.

[*Exit JEREMY.*]

[*Enter JENNY.*]

ANGELICA. Well, have you been there?—Come hither.

JENNY [*aside to ANGELICA*]. Yes, madam; Sir Sampson will wait upon you presently.

VALENTINE. You are not leaving me in this uncertainty?

ANGELICA. Would anything, but a madman complain of uncertainty? Uncertainty and expectation are the joys of life. Security is an insipid thing, and the overtaking and possessing of a wish discovers the folly of the chase. Never let us know one another better; for the pleasure of a masquerade is done, when we come to show our faces; but I'll tell you

two things before I leave you: I am not the fool you take me for; and you are mad and don't know it.

[*Exit ANGELICA.*]

VALENTINE. From a riddle you can expect nothing but a riddle. There's my instruction and the moral of my lesson.

[*Enter JEREMY.*]

JEREMY. What, is the lady gone again, sir? I hope you understood one another before she went.

VALENTINE. Understood! She is harder to be understood than a piece of Egyptian antiquity, or an Irish manuscript; you may pore till you spoil your eyes, and not improve your knowledge.

JEREMY. I have heard 'em say, sir, they read hard Hebrew books backwards. Maybe you begin to read at the wrong end.

VALENTINE. They say so of a witch's prayer, and dreams and Dutch almanacs are to be understood by contraries. But there's regularity and method in that; she is a medal without a reverse or inscription, for indifference has both sides alike. Yet while she does not seem to hate me, I will pursue her, and know her if it be possible, in spite of the opinion of my satirical friend, Scandal, who says,

*That women are like tricks by slight of hand,
Which, to admire, we should not understand.*

ACT V

SCENE.—*A Room in FORESIGHT'S House.*

[*Enter ANGELICA and JENNY.*]

ANGELICA. Where is Sir Sampson? Did you not tell me he would be here before me?

JENNY. He's at the great glass in the dining-room, madam, setting his cravat and wig.

ANGELICA. How! I'm glad on't! If he has a mind I should like him, it's a sign he likes me; and that's more than half my design.

JENNY. I hear him, madam.

ANGELICA. Leave me, and d'ye hear, if Valentine should come, or send, I am not to be spoken with.

[Enter SIR SAMPSON.]

SIR SAMPSON. I have not been honoured with the commands of a fair lady a great while—odd, madam, you have revived me—not since I was five and thirty.

ANGELICA. Why, you have no great reason to complain, Sir Sampson; that is not long ago.

SIR SAMPSON. Zooks, but it is, madam, a very great while to a man that admires a fine woman as much as I do.

ANGELICA. You're an absolute courtier, Sir Sampson.

SIR SAMPSON. Not at all, madam. Odsbud, you wrong me; I am not so old neither to be a bare courtier, only a man of words—Odd, I have warm blood about me yet. . . . Come, come, let me tell you, you women think a man old too soon; faith and troth, you do! Come, don't despise fifty; odd, fifty, in a hale constitution, is no such contemptible age.

ANGELICA. Fifty a contemptible age! Not at all . . . a very fashionable age I think. I assure you, I know very considerable beaux, that set a good face upon fifty. Fifty! I have seen fifty in a side-box by candle light, outblossom five-and-twenty.

SIR SAMPSON. Oh pox! Outsides! . . . Mere outsides! Hang your side-box beaux! No, I'm none of those, none of your forced trees, that pretend to blossom in the fall, and bud when they should bring forth fruit. I am of a long lived race, and inherit vigour: none of my ancestors married till fifty, yet they begot sons and daughters till fourscore. I am of your patriarchs, I, a branch of one of your antediluvian families, fellows that the flood could not wash away. Well, madam, what are your commands? Has any young rogue affronted you, and shall I cut his throat? Or——

ANGELICA. No, Sir Sampson, I have no quarrel upon my hands—I have more occasion for your conduct than your courage at this time. To tell you the truth, I'm weary of living single, and want a husband.

SIR SAMPSON. Odsbud, and 'tis pity you should! [Aside.]

Odd, would she would like me, then I should hamper my young rogues: odd, would she would! Faith and troth, she's devilish handsome! [*Aloud.*] Madam, you deserve a good husband, and 'twere pity you should be thrown away upon any of these young idle rogues about the town. Odd, there's ne'er a young fellow worth hanging! That is, a very young fellow. . . . They never think beforehand of anything. And if they commit matrimony, 'tis as they commit murder; out of a frolick, and are ready to hang themselves, or to be hanged by the law, the next morning. Odso, have a care, madam.

ANGELICA. Therefore I ask your advice, Sir Sampson: I have fortune enough to make any man easy that I can like. If there were such a thing as a young agreeable man, with a reasonable stock of good nature and sense—for I would neither have an absolute wit nor a fool.

SIR SAMPSON. Odd, you are hard to please, madam; to find a young fellow that is neither a wit in his own eye, nor a fool in the eye of the world, is a very hard task. But, faith and troth, you speak very discreetly; for I hate both a wit and a fool.

ANGELICA. She that marries a fool, Sir Sampson, forfeits the reputation of her honesty or understanding. And she that marries a very witty man is a slave to the severity and insolent conduct of her husband. I should like a man of wit for a lover, because I would have such an one in my power; but I would no more be his wife than his enemy. For his malice is not a more terrible consequence of his aversion than his jealousy is of his love.

SIR SAMPSON. None of old Foresight's sibyls ever uttered such a truth. Odsbud, you have won my heart. I hate a wit; I had a son that was spoiled among 'em—a good hopeful lad till he learned to be a wit, and might have risen in the state—but, a pox on't, his wit run him out of his money, and now his poverty has run him out of his wits.

ANGELICA. Sir Sampson, as your friend, I must tell you, you are very much abused in that matter. He's no more mad than you are.

SIR SAMPSON. How, madam! Would I could prove it.

ANGELICA. I can tell you how that may be done. But it is a thing that would make me appear to be too much concerned in your affairs.

SIR SAMPSON [*aside*]. Odsbud, I believe she likes me. [*Aloud.*] Ah, madam, all my affairs are scarce worthy to be laid at your feet; and I wish, madam, they were in a better posture, that I might make a more becoming offer to a lady of your incomparable beauty and merit. If I had Peru in one hand, and Mexico in t'other, and the Eastern empire under my feet, it would make me only a more glorious victim to be offered at the shrine of your beauty.

ANGELICA. Bless me, Sir Sampson, what's the matter?

SIR SAMPSON. Odd, madam, I love you.—And if you would take my advice in a husband——

ANGELICA. Hold, hold, Sir Sampson. I asked your advice for a husband, and you are giving me your consent. I was indeed thinking to propose something like it in jest, to satisfy you about Valentine; for if a match were seemingly carried on between you and me, it would oblige him to throw off his disguise of madness in apprehension of losing me . . . for you know he has long pretended a passion for me.

SIR SAMPSON. Gadzooks, a most ingenious contrivance if we were to go through with it! But why must the match only be seemingly carried on? Odd, let it be a real contract.

ANGELICA. O fie, Sir Sampson, what would the world say?

SIR SAMPSON. Say? They would say you were a wise woman and I a happy man. Odd, madam, I'll love you as long as I live, and leave you a good jointure when I die.

ANGELICA. Aye, but that is not in your power, Sir Sampson; for when Valentine confesses himself in his senses, he must make over his inheritance to his younger brother.

SIR SAMPSON. Odd, you're cunning—a wary baggage! Faith and troth, I like you the better!—But, I warrant you, I have a proviso in the obligation in favour of myself; body o' me, I have a trick to turn the settlement upon the issue male of our two bodies begotten. Odsbud, let us find children, and I'll find an estate!

.

ANGELICA. Let me consult my lawyer concerning this obligation; and if I find what you propose practicable; I'll give you my answer.

SIR SAMPSON. With all my heart: come in with me, and I'll lend you the bond. You shall consult your lawyer, and I'll consult a parson; Odzooks I'm a young man. Odzooks I'm a young man, and I'll make it appear—Odd, you're devilish handsome. Faith and troth, you're very handsome—and I'm very young. . . . Odsbud, hussy, you know how to choose, and so do I. Odd, I think we are very well met. Give me your hand; odd, let me kiss it. 'Tis as warm and as soft. . . .

ANGELICA. Hold, Sir Sampson! You're profuse before your time. You'll spend your estate before you come to it.

SIR SAMPSON. No, no, only give you a rent-roll of my possessions.—Ah! Baggage—I warrant you, . . . your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning.

ANGELICA. Have a care, and don't over act your part. If you remember, the strongest of the name pulled an old house over his head at last.

SIR SAMPSON. Say you so hussy? Come, let's go then. . . . Odso, here's somebody coming.

[*Exeunt SIR SAMPSON and ANGELICA.*]

[*Enter TATTLE and JEREMY.*]

TATTLE. Is not that she, gone out just now?

JEREMY. Aye, sir, she's just going to the place of appointment. Ah, sir, if you are not very faithful and close in this business, you'll certainly be the death of a person that has a most extraordinary passion for your honour's service.

TATTLE. Aye, who's that?

JEREMY. Even my unworthy self, sir. Sir, I have had an appetite to be fed with your commands a great while; and now, sir, my former master having much troubled the fountain of his understanding, it is a very plausible occasion for me to quench my thirst at the spring of your bounty. I thought I could not recommend myself better to you, sir, than

by the delivery of a great beauty and fortune into your arms, whom I have heard you sigh for.

TATTLE. I'll make thy fortune; say no more. Thou art a pretty fellow, and canst carry a message to a lady in a pretty soft kind of phrase, and with a good persuading accent.

JEREMY. Sir, I have the seeds of rhetoric and oratory in my head; I have been at Cambridge.

TATTLE. Aye! 'Tis well enough for a servant to be bred at an university, but the education is a little too pedantic for a gentleman. I hope you are secret in your nature—private, close, ha?

JEREMY. O sir, for that, sir, 'tis my chief talent. I'm as secret as the head of Nilus.

TATTLE. Aye? Who's he, though? A privy counsellor?

JEREMY [*aside*]. Oh, ignorance! [*Aloud.*] A cunning Egyptian, sir, that with his arms would overrun the country, yet nobody could ever find out his headquarters.

TATTLE. Close dog! . . . The time draws nigh, Jeremy. Angelica will be veiled like a nun, and I must be hooded like a friar. Ha, Jeremy?

JEREMY. Aye, sir, hooded like a hawk, to seize at first sight upon the quarry. It is the whim of my master's madness to be so dressed; and she is so in love with him, she'll comply with anything to please him. Poor lady, I'm sure she'll have reason to pray for me when she finds what a happy exchange she has made between a madman and so accomplished a gentleman.

TATTLE. Aye, faith, so she will, Jeremy. You're a good friend to her, poor creature. I swear I do it hardly so much in consideration of myself as compassion to her.

JEREMY. 'Tis an act of charity, sir, to save a fine woman with thirty thousand pounds, from throwing herself away.

TATTLE. So 'tis, faith! I might have saved several others in my time; but, egad, I could never find in my heart to marry anybody before.

JEREMY. Well, sir, I'll go and tell her my master's coming, and meet you in half a quarter of an hour with your disguise,

at your own lodgings. You must talk a little madly: she won't distinguish the tone of your voice.

TATTLE. No, no, let me alone for a counterfeit—I'll be ready for you. [Exit JEREMY.]

[Enter MISS PRUE.]

MISS PRUE. O Mr. Tattle, are you here? I'm glad I have found you. I have been looking up and down for you like anything, till I'm as tired as anything in the world.

TATTLE [*aside*]. Oh, pox! How shall I get rid of this foolish girl?

MISS PRUE. O I have pure news, I can tell you, pure news. I must not marry the seaman now, my father says so. Why won't you be my husband? You say you love me—and you won't be my husband. And I know you may be my husband now if you please.

TATTLE. O fie, miss! Who told you so, child?

MISS PRUE. Why, my father; I told him that you loved me.

TATTLE. O fie, miss! Why did you do so? And who told you so, child?

MISS PRUE. Who? Why you did; did not you?

TATTLE. O Pox! That was yesterday, miss; that was a great while ago, child. I have been asleep since—slept a whole night, and did not so much as dream of the matter.

MISS PRUE. Pshaw! Oh, but I dreamed that it was so though.

TATTLE. Aye, but your father will tell you that dreams come by contraries, child. O fie. What, we must not love one another now! Pshaw, that would be a foolish thing indeed. Fie, fie, you're a woman now, and must think of a new man every morning and forget him every night. No, no! To marry is to be a child again, and play with the same rattle always. O fie, marrying is a paw thing.

MISS PRUE. Well, but don't you love me as well as you did last night, then?

TATTLE. No, no, child; you would not have me.

MISS PRUE. No? Yes, but I would though.

TATTLE. Pshaw! But I tell you, you would not. You forget you're a woman and don't know your own mind.

MISS PRUE. But here's my father, and he knows my mind.

[Enter FORESIGHT.]

FORESIGHT. Oh, Mr. Tattle, your Servant! You are a close man, but methinks your love to my daughter was a secret I might have been trusted with—or had you a mind to try if I could discover it by my art?—Hum, ha! I think there is something in your physiognomy that has a resemblance of her, and the girl is like me.

TATTLE. And so you would infer that you and I are alike. —[*Aside.*] What does the old prig mean? I'll banter him, and laugh at him, and leave him. [*Aloud.*] I fancy you have a wrong notion of faces.

FORESIGHT. How? What? A wrong notion! How so?

TATTLE. In the way of art. I have some taking features, not obvious to vulgar eyes, that are indications of a sudden turn of good fortune, in the lottery of wives, and promise a great beauty and great fortune reserved alone for me, by a private intrigue of destiny, kept secret from the piercing eye of perspicuity—from all astrologers, and the stars themselves.

FORESIGHT. How! I will make it appear that what you say is impossible.

TATTLE. Sir, I beg your pardon, I'm in haste——

FORESIGHT. For what?

TATTLE. To be married, sir, married.

FORESIGHT. Ay, but pray take me along with you, sir——

TATTLE. No, sir; 'tis to be done privately. I never make confidants.

FORESIGHT. Well, but my consent, I mean.—You won't marry my daughter without my consent?

TATTLE. Who—I, sir? I'm an absolute stranger to you and your daughter, sir.

FORESIGHT. Heyday! What time of the moon is this?

TATTLE. Very true, sir, and desire to continue so. I have no more love for your daughter than I have likeness of you;

and I have a secret in my heart, which you would be glad to know, and shan't know; and yet you shall know it too, and be sorry for it afterwards. I'd have you to know, sir, that I am as knowing as the stars, and as secret as the night. And I'm going to be married just now, yet did not know of it half an hour ago; and the lady stays for me, and does not know of it yet. There's a mystery for you! I know you love to untie difficulties. Or if you can't solve this, stay here a quarter of an hour, and I'll come and explain it to you. *[Exit TATTLE.]*

MISS. O father, why will you let him go? Won't you make him to be my husband?

FORESIGHT. Mercy on us! What do these lunacies portend? Alas! he's mad, child, stark wild.

MISS. What, and must not I have e'er a husband then? . . . Indeed but I will. For now my mind is set upon a man, I will have a man some way or other. Oh! methinks I'm sick when I think of a man; and if I can't have one, I would go to sleep all my life. For when I'm awake it makes me wish and long, and I don't know for what: and I'd rather be always asleep, than sick with thinking.

FORESIGHT. Oh, fearful! I think the girl's influenced, too. Hussy, you shall have a rod.

MISS. A fiddle of a rod. I'll have a husband: and if you won't get me one, I'll get one for myself: I'll marry our Robin the butler. He says he loves me, and he's a handsome man, and shall be my husband. I warrant he'll be my husband, and thank me too, for he told me so.

[Enter SCANDAL, MRS. FORESIGHT, and NURSE.]

FORESIGHT *[aside]*. Did he so? I'll dispatch him for't presently; rogue! *[Aloud.]* Oh, Nurse, come hither.

NURSE. What is your worship's pleasure?

FORESIGHT. Here, take your young mistress, and lock her up presently, till farther orders from me.—Not a word, hussy. Do what I bid you—no reply. Away! And bid Robin make ready to give an account of his plate and linen, d'ye hear? *[To Miss.]* Begone when I bid you.

[Exit MISS PRUE.]

MRS. FORESIGHT. What's the matter, husband?

FORESIGHT. 'Tis not convenient to tell you now.—Mr. Scandal, Heaven keep us all in our senses! I fear there is a contagious frenzy abroad. How does Valentine?

SCANDAL. Oh, I hope he will do well again. I have a message from him to your niece, Angelica.

FORESIGHT. I think she has not returned since she went abroad with Sir Sampson. Nurse, why are you not gone?

[*Exit NURSE.*]

[*Enter BEN.*]

MRS. FORESIGHT. Here's Mr. Benjamin; he can tell us if his father be come home.

BEN. Who, father? Aye, he's come home with a vengeance.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Why! What's the matter?

BEN. Matter! Why, he's mad.

FORESIGHT. Mercy on us! I was afraid of this.

BEN. And there's the handsome young woman—she, as they say Brother Val went mad for—she's mad too, I think.

FORESIGHT. O my poor niece, my poor niece—is she gone too? Well, I shall run mad next.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Well, but how mad? How d'ye mean?

BEN. Nay, I'll give you leave to guess. I'll undertake a voyage to Antegoa—no, hold, I mayn't say so neither—but I'll sail as far as Leghorn, and back again before you shall guess at the matter and do nothing else. You may take in all the points of the compass, and not hit right.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Your experiment will take up a little too much time.

BEN. Why then, I'll tell you. There's a new wedding upon the stocks, and they two are going to be married to rights.

SCANDAL. Who?

BEN. Why father and—the young woman. I can't hit of her name.

SCANDAL. Angelica?

BEN. Aye, the same.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Sir Sampson and Angelica? Impossible!

BEN. That may be—but I'm sure it is as I tell you.

SCANDAL. 'Sdeath! It's a jest! I can't believe it.

BEN. Look you, friend, it's nothing to me whether you believe it or no. What I say is true. D'ye see, they are married, or just going to be married—I know not which.

FORESIGHT. Well, but they are not mad? That is, not lunatic?

BEN. I don't know what you call madness; but she's mad for a husband, and he's horn-mad, I think, or they'd ne'er make a match together.—Here they come.

[Enter SIR SAMPSON, ANGELICA, BUCKRAM.]

SIR SAMPSON. Where is this old soothsayer, this uncle of mine elect? Aha, old Foresight, Uncle Foresight! Wish me joy, Uncle Foresight, double joy, both as uncle and astrologer; here's a conjunction that was not foretold in all your ephemeris. The brightest star in the blue firmament—is *shot from above, in a jelly of love*, and so forth; and I'm lord of the ascendant. Odd, you're an old fellow, Foresight—Uncle I mean—a very old fellow, Uncle Foresight; and yet you shall live to dance at my wedding—faith and troth you shall. Odd, we'll have the music of the spheres for thee, old Lilly, that we will, and thou shalt lead up a dance *in via lactea*.

FORESIGHT. I'm thunderstruck! You are not married to my niece?

SIR SAMPSON. Not absolutely married, uncle, but very near it; within a kiss of the matter, as you see. [Kisses ANGELICA.]

ANGELICA. 'Tis very true indeed, uncle; I hope you'll be my father, and give me.

SIR SAMPSON. That he shall, or I'll burn his globes. . . .

SCANDAL. Death and Hell! Where's Valentine?

[Exit SCANDAL.]

MRS. FORESIGHT. This is so surprising—

SIR SAMPSON. How! What does my aunt say? Surprising, aunt? Not at all!

BEN. Father, if I might be your pilot in this case, you

should not marry her. It's just the same thing, as if so be you should sail so far as the Straights without provision.

SIR SAMPSON. Who gave you authority to speak, sirrah? To your element, fish! Be mute, fish, and to sea! Rule your helm, sirrah; don't direct me.

BEN. Well, well, take you care of your own helm, or you mayn't keep your new vessel steady.

SIR SAMPSON. Why, you impudent tarpaulin! Sirrah, do you bring your forecastle jests upon your father? But I shall be even with you. I won't give you a groat. Mr. Buckram, is the conveyance so worded that nothing can possibly descend to this scoundrel? I would not so much as have him have the prospect of an estate; though there were no way to come to it but by the North-east passage.

BUCKRAM. Sir, it is drawn according to your directions; there is not the least cranny of the law unstopped.

BEN. Lawyer, I believe there's many a cranny and leak unstopped in your conscience.—If so be that one had a pump to your bosom, I believe we should discover a foul hold. They say a witch will sail in a sieve, but I believe the devil would not venture aboard o'your conscience. And that's for you.

SIR SAMPSON. Hold your tongue, sirrah! How now! Who's here?

[Enter TATTLE and MRS. FRAIL.]

MRS. FRAIL. O, sister, the most unlucky accident.

MRS. FORESIGHT. What's the matter?

TATTLE. Oh, the two most unfortunate poor creatures in the world we are.

FORESIGHT. Bless us! How so?

MRS. FRAIL. Ah, Mr. Tattle and I, poor Mr. Tattle and I are—I can't speak it out.

TATTLE. Nor I—poor Mrs. Frail and I are—

MRS. FRAIL. Married.

MRS. FORESIGHT. Married! How?

TATTLE. Suddenly—before we knew where we were—that villain Jeremy, by the help of disguises, tricked us into one another.

FORESIGHT. Why, you told me just now you went hence in haste to be married.

ANGELICA. But I believe Mr. Tattle meant the favour to me: I thank him.

TATTLE. I did, as I hope to be saved, madam; my intentions were good. But this is the most cruel thing—to marry one does not know how, nor why, nor wherefore.—The devil take me if ever I was so much concerned at any thing in my life.

ANGELICA. 'Tis very unhappy if you don't care for one another.

TATTLE. The least in the world—that is for my part; I speak for myself. Gad, I never had the least thought of serious kindness—I never liked anybody less in my life. Poor woman! Gad, I'm sorry for her, too; for I have no reason to hate her neither. But I believe I shall lead her a damned sort of life.

MRS. FORESIGHT [*to FRAIL*]. He's better than no husband at all—though he's a coxcomb.

MRS. FRAIL [*to her*]. Aye, aye, it's well it's no worse. [*Aloud.*] Nay, for my part I always despised Mr. Tattle of all things; nothing but his being my husband could have made me like him less.

TATTLE. Look you there, I thought as much! Pox on't, I wish we could keep it secret! Why, I don't believe any of this company would speak of it.

MRS. FRAIL. But, my dear, that's impossible; the parson and that rogue Jeremy will publish it.

TATTLE. Aye, my dear, so they will, as you say.

ANGELICA. Oh, you'll agree very well in a little time; custom will make it easy to you.

TATTLE. Easy! Pox on't!

.

BEN. Why there's another match now, as tho'f a couple of privateers were looking for a prize and should fall foul of one another. I'm sorry for the young man, with all my heart. Look you, friend, if I may advise you; when she's

going—for that you must expect, I have experience of her—when she's going, let her go. For no matrimony is tough enough to hold her, and if she can't drag her anchor along with her, she'll break her cable, I can tell you that. Who's here? The madman!

[*Enter VALENTINE, SCANDAL, and JEREMY.*]

VALENTINE. No, here's the fool; and, if occasion be, I'll give it under my hand.

SIR SAMPSON. How now?

VALENTINE. Sir, I'm come to acknowledge my errors, and ask your pardon.

SIR SAMPSON. What, have you found your senses at last then? In good time, sir.

VALENTINE. You were abused, sir; I never was distracted.

FORESIGHT. How! Not mad! Mr. Scandal.

SCANDAL. No, really, sir. I'm his witness, it was all counterfeit.

VALENTINE. I thought I had reasons.—But it was a poor contrivance; the effect has shown it such.

SIR SAMPSON. Contrivance! What, to cheat me? To cheat your father! Sirrah, could you hope to prosper?

VALENTINE. Indeed, I thought, sir, when the father endeavoured to undo the son, it was a reasonable return of nature.

SIR SAMPSON. Very good, sir!—Mr. Buckram, are you ready?—[*To VALENTINE.*] Come, sir, will you sign and seal?

VALENTINE. If you please, sir; but first I would ask this lady one question.

SIR SAMPSON. Sir, you must ask me leave first. That lady! No, sir; you shall ask that lady no questions till you have asked her blessing, sir. That lady is to be my wife.

VALENTINE. I have heard as much, sir, but I would have it from her own mouth.

SIR SAMPSON. That's as much as to say, I lie, sir, and you don't believe what I say.

VALENTINE. Pardon me, sir. But I reflect that I very

lately counterfeited madness. I don't know but the frolic may go round.

SIR SAMPSON. Come, chuck——satisfy him, answer him.——Come, come, Mr. Buckram, the pen and ink.

BUCKRAM. Here it is, sir, with the deed; all is ready.

[VALENTINE goes to ANGELICA.]

ANGELICA. 'Tis true, you have a great while pretended love to me. Nay, what if you were sincere; still you must pardon me if I think my own inclinations have a better right to dispose of my person than yours.

SIR SAMPSON. Are you answered now, sir?

VALENTINE. Yes, sir.

SIR SAMPSON. Where's your plot, sir? And your contrivance now, sir? Will you sign, sir? Come, will you sign and seal?

VALENTINE. With all my heart, sir.

SCANDAL. 'Sdeath, you are not mad indeed, to ruin yourself?

VALENTINE. I have been disappointed of my only hope, and he that loses hope may part with anything. I never valued fortune but as it was subservient to my pleasure, and my only pleasure was to please this lady: I have made many vain attempts, and find at last that nothing but my ruin can effect it; which, for that reason, I will sign to.——Give me the paper.

ANGELICA [*aside*]. Generous Valentine!

BUCKRAM. Here is the deed, sir.

VALENTINE. But where is the bond by which I am obliged to sign this?

BUCKRAM. Sir Sampson, you have it.

ANGELICA. No, I have it; and I'll use it, as I would everything that is an enemy to Valentine. [*Tears the paper.*]

SIR SAMPSON. How now!

VALENTINE. Ha!

ANGELICA [*To VALENTINE*]. Had I the world to give you, it could not make me worthy of so generous and faithful a passion. Here's my hand; my heart was always yours, and struggled very hard to make this utmost trial of your virtue.

VALENTINE. Between pleasure and amazement, I am lost.
——But on my knees I take the blessing.

SIR SAMPSON. Oons, what is the meaning of this?

BEN. Mess, here's the wind changed again! Father, you and I may make a voyage together now.

ANGELICA. Well, Sir Sampson, since I have played you a trick, I'll advise you how you may avoid such another. Learn to be a good father, or you'll never get a second wife. I always loved your son, and hated your unforgiving nature. I was resolved to try him to the utmost; I have tried you too, and know you both. You have not more faults than he has virtues, and 'tis hardly more pleasure to me that I can make him and myself happy than that I can punish you.

VALENTINE. If my happiness could receive addition, this kind surprise would make it double.

SIR SAMPSON. Oons, you're a crocodile.

FORESIGHT. Really, Sir Sampson, this is a sudden eclipse.

SIR SAMPSON. You're an illiterate old fool, and I'm another.
[Exit.]

SCANDAL. Well, Madam, you have done exemplary justice in punishing an inhuman father, and rewarding a faithful lover. But there is a third good work which I, in particular, must thank you for. I was an infidel to your sex, and you have converted me.—For now I am convinced that not all women are like fortune, blind in bestowing favours, either on those who do not merit or who do not want 'em.

ANGELICA. 'Tis an unreasonable accusation, that you lay upon our sex: you tax us with injustice, only to cover your own want of merit. You would all have the reward of love; but few have the constancy to stay till it becomes your due. Men are generally hypocrites and infidels; they pretend to worship, but have neither zeal nor faith. How few, like Valentine, would persevere even to martyrdom, and sacrifice their interest to their constancy? In admiring me, you misplace the novelty.

*The miracle to-day is that we find
A lover true, not that a woman's kind.*

THE SECOND MAN

(1927)

BY

S. N. BEHRMAN

This play in its printed form is designed for the reading public only. All dramatic rights in it are fully protected by copyrights, both in the United States and Great Britain, and no public or private performance—professional or amateur—may be given without the written permission of the Theatre Guild, and the payment of royalty. As the courts have also ruled that the public reading of a play for pay or where tickets are sold constitutes a performance, no such reading may be given except under the conditions above stated. Anyone disregarding the author's rights renders himself liable to prosecution. Communications should be sent to The Theatre Guild, Inc., 245 West Fifty-second Street, New York City.

The Second Man was originally presented by the Theatre Guild at the Guild Theatre, New York City, on April 11, 1927, with the following cast:

CHARACTERS

MRS. KENDALL FRAYNE	<i>Lynn Fontanne</i>
CLARK STOREY	<i>Alfred Lunt</i>
AUSTIN LOWE	<i>Earle Larrimore</i>
MONICA GREY	<i>Margalo Gillmore</i>
ALBERT	<i>Edward Hartford</i>

SCENE.—CLARK STOREY'S Apartment in West Fifty-sixth Street, New York City.

The curtain is lowered in Act II for one minute to note the passing of time.

... For, together with, and as it were behind, so much pleasurable emotion, there is always that other strange second man in me, calm, critical, observant, unmoved, blasé, odious.

—LORD LEIGHTON: *Letter to his sister.*

THE SECOND MAN

(DEDICATED TO THE AUTHOR'S BROTHERS.)

ACT I

SCENE.—*The living-room of a duplex apartment of a studio-building on the West Side. The proscenium displaces the great windows typical of these apartments; midway up the rear wall is visible the railed landing of the stairs leading to the upper bedrooms. The great room is comfortably furnished, a slight preponderance of the "exotic" in furnishing. The walls are lined with book-shelves wherever convenient. There are books and magazines in profusion everywhere. On the right, near the fireplace, is a long, low, extremely comfortable looking armchair; leaning against it is an ordinary sewing board. On the other side of this chair is a low tabouret on which reposes writing materials and a telephone. Not far from this armchair, also, just below the fireplace, is a small "portable" gramophone on a small stand.*

MRS. KENDALL FRAYNE is discovered walking nervously about near the armchair. She is a tall, handsome, beautifully dressed woman, about thirty-five. She might be described as "majestic"; she has a fine face; her voice is beautifully modulated and restrained even when she speaks under the stress of deep feeling.

She is nervous and angry. Keeps looking at her watch. Takes up the manuscript of a story on the tabouret, and drops it when she sees she has already read it. Finally she makes up her mind to leave; grasps her fur wrap, lying on a chair. At the door she stops, returns to the telephone. Her voice is calm as she asks for the number.

KENDALL [at the telephone]. Gramercy 4304 please—yes—may I speak to Mr. Storey please?—I believe he lunched

at the Club and I thought he might still be there—thank you so much— [*She holds the receiver to her ear, sitting on the arm of the chair.*—yes—about how long ago?—thank you.

[*She takes up her wrap again with a sweeping gesture. This time she means really to go. She goes upstage and disappears in the little hallway leading to the corridor. The telephone tinkles. She runs back, quite excited and answers the call.*]

Yes. Yes, the line was busy—who?—no, Mr. Storey is not in—this—this is a friend of his—is there any message?—oh, Miss Grey—this is Mrs. Frayne—how do you do?—yes—he was here but stepped out—he'll be back in a few minutes—I'm leaving now but I'll leave the message for him. Not at all. Good-bye.

[*She hangs up again. She is thoroughly angry, humiliated. She writes out message. Starts upstage. CLARKE STOREY rushes in.*]

STOREY. Awfully sorry.

KENDALL. I'm leaving.

STOREY. Oh, come! I'm not so late.

KENDALL. Only an hour.

STOREY. The distinguished Englishman *insisted* on my dropping into his hotel with him. We got to talking—I told him his heroines were all neurotic and his heroes——

KENDALL. I've got to go. [*She tries to cross him.*]

STOREY. Honestly, Kendall, I rushed up here as fast as I could. Had a fight with one taxi-driver and it took me hours to find another. Please don't be angry. I'm full of things to tell you——

KENDALL. This always happens.

STOREY. Besides, I thought you'd be quite comfortable. I left my new story for you to read.

KENDALL. That took exactly fifteen minutes.

STOREY. Only that? Really, I must write a novel. Then I can be late with impunity. Great idea for a publisher's blurb: "This novel is so absorbing that a jealous woman, waiting for the author to keep an appointment, forgot all about him——"

KENDALL. Really, you've got to stop treating me like this!

STOREY. I swear I only stayed on so long because I thought it would amuse you to hear about the great English novelist. I kept saying to myself: "This will amuse Kendall——!"

KENDALL. Don't talk like that to me. It's all right for Monica Grey. It's transparent to me. She just telephoned you, by the way.

STOREY. What did she want?

KENDALL. You—— It was humiliating. I had to say you had gone out. Of course she understood that I was waiting for you.

STOREY. Oh, well, everybody in town was at that luncheon. The great novelist is tall and thin and has a red beard. I suspect that if he shaved, it would be discovered that he has no chin. And I was delighted to find what I already suspected from reading his novels—he has no sense of humour.

KENDALL. Because he didn't find your flippancy amusing?

STOREY. It's as good a test as any.

KENDALL. He's a genius. It shows on nearly every page of his writing.

STOREY. I dare say he is a genius. Sad thing about geniuses—almost invariably lack humor. It's true. Genius is a sort of fanaticism——

[*The telephone rings.*]

KENDALL. I'm going.

STOREY. Please—just a minute—— [At telephone.] You're doing it—who is this?—oh, hello there, Austin—what about?—Monica again?—I thought you were all set—oh, you take her too seriously—I'm busy right now—Mrs. Frayne—oh, sure—say twenty minutes—bye-bye. [*He hangs up.*] Austin Lowe. Wants to weep on my shoulder. All burned up about Monica Grey.

KENDALL. And she's burned up about you.

STOREY. Nonsense. A baby. Doesn't know what she wants.

KENDALL. I think she does. [*Casually.*] Why don't you marry her?

STOREY. I have other plans.

KENDALL. Meaning?

STOREY. Meaning you.

KENDALL. Why should you want to marry me? Outside of the fact that—you love comfort and I am—rich.

STOREY. Outside of the fact that I love comfort—and that you are rich—I like you very much. I like you enormously. You're the most intelligent woman I know.

KENDALL. Not so intelligent. I discovered that—just—now—waiting for you.

STOREY. How come?

KENDALL. I was—jealous.

STOREY [*wickedly*]. Of the celebrated English novelist? You misunderstand me, Kendall.

KENDALL. Jealous of your self-sufficiency. Your independence of me. I saw you there talking, enjoying yourself, revelling in your own fluency. I realized perfectly well that you must have forgotten me or, if you did think of me, that you must be saying: "Oh, she'll wait—" I was jealous, Storey.

STOREY. You too! My last hope is gone.

KENDALL. You see, Storey, you aren't in the least bit in love with me.

STOREY. I feel a much rarer, more stable emotion—friendliness and all sorts of affection and——

KENDALL. I know.

STOREY. I was hoping we—you and I might demonstrate the triumph of the loveless marriage.

KENDALL. How old are you, Storey?

STOREY. What did I tell you the last time you asked me?

KENDALL. I believe you said twenty-eight.

STOREY. I lied. I'm thirty.

KENDALL. I'm thirty-five.

STOREY. Delightful age.

KENDALL. When I'm forty-five you won't be any older than you are now.

STOREY. Won't I!

KENDALL. Suppose you fall in love?

STOREY. I'm through with that sort of thing.

KENDALL. You sound so young sometimes—so naïve.

STOREY. But I've been through that sort of thing. I know.

KENDALL. I can't imagine you really in love.

STOREY. But I assure you I was. It lasted two years. I suffered. I agonized.

KENDALL. Who was she?

STOREY. No one you know. She's married now. Has children and a dull husband, a dull home. I see her occasionally. And I wonder at myself. Was it for her I felt that base emotion—jealousy? Was it for her I used to wait in a torment of anxiety and anticipation? It seems impossible now. Such a nice, unimaginative, plodding creature. I see her and I wonder.

KENDALL. It may happen again—without warning.

STOREY. I doubt it. I'm fed up with love. It's a mirage, an illusion, a sort of pathology, feeds on being unsatisfied, rejected. Attain love and it vanishes—vanishes into the thin air or solidifies into such things as comfort and affection—things which you and I would have from the start, my dear.

KENDALL [*doubtfully*]. All this is very pretty——

STOREY. [*The telephone rings.*] That damn telephone—— [*Taking it up.*] Yes—hello, Monica—how are you?—yes, Mrs. Frayne told me—I'd just stepped out to buy her a magazine with a poem of mine in it—oh, a trifle—not one of my major works—you've got to see me?—Austin just called me and told me the same thing—what've you been doing to him?—now don't be a silly child—you're lucky to have him—it's no good you're coming to see me—I sha'n't coddle you—no, don't come; I sha'n't be here—I—— [*She has put down the receiver on him. In disgust.*] Crazy kid!

KENDALL. Gracious! You *are* pursued by women!

STOREY. Now there's a case—Monica Grey! Poor as a church mouse. Mother at her wit's end to keep up the pretence of a conservative gentility. And here's Austin Lowe absolutely dotty about her. A millionaire and a great man to boot——

KENDALL [*gently*]. He *is* dull, Storey.

STOREY. Dull! One of the most promising young chemists in America. Under thirty and he's actually discovered some—

thing new—a new way of doing something or other. He's an F.R.S.!

KENDALL. Yes. And a B-O-R-E.

STOREY. If there's one man on earth I envy it's Austin Lowe. If I had his money and his brain—the vices I'd encourage—the secrets I'd explore——!

KENDALL. In that case I'm glad you haven't his money and I'm certainly glad you haven't his brain.

STOREY. Just because he's not glib, like I am!

KENDALL. He never has anything interesting to say——

STOREY. I can talk, can't I? And that impresses you. But Austin's a great man who's made a contribution to science while I'm an imitative poet and a second-rate short-story writer.

KENDALL. You *are* a dear, Storey.

STOREY. Well, it's true!

KENDALL. I'll make a great sacrifice: Monica can have the great man. I'll take the second-rate short-story writer.

STOREY. You'll get your preference. Austin can't see any one in the world but Monica.

KENDALL. She doesn't care much for him, though.

STOREY. She will. I'll let you in on a little secret——

KENDALL. Yes?

STOREY. Austin and Monica are engaged.

KENDALL. Really? It's not announced, is it?

STOREY. It just happened yesterday. Austin telephoned me in a perfect ecstasy.

KENDALL. I gather he's in less of an ecstasy to-day——

STOREY. Oh, Monica's a crazy kid. And being completely in love with her Austin's at her mercy.

KENDALL. Miss Grey is rather adorable. Likes to be—audacious—doesn't she?

STOREY. Really an innocent. A Tennysonian ingenue with a Freudian patter.

KENDALL. Something appealingly wistful about her.

STOREY. Actually she has all the picture-book illusions of a *Saturday Evening Post* heroine—but she's picked up the vocabulary of the intelligentsia. Don't let it deceive you.

KENDALL. Are you urging her to marry Austin?

STOREY. Urge her? My dear, I insist on it.

KENDALL. Why?

STOREY. Why? Because Austin'll make an admirable husband for her. She'll settle down and have babies and live in luxury. Her mother'll spend her old age in comfort. And—so shall I!

KENDALL. You're incorrigible.

STOREY. I have enormous respect for money. You can't appreciate it. It can only be felt by those whose past was poverty-stricken and whose present—is precarious.

KENDALL. You could make a fortune if you worked harder.

STOREY. I doubt it. I'm too intelligent to write commercial truck and incapable of writing great stuff. It's unfortunate. No, my dear. The only solution for me is to persuade you to marry me.

KENDALL. Would you want to marry me if I were poor?

STOREY. That would be presumptuous.

KENDALL. Presumptuous?

STOREY. Only the rich should offer to marry poor girls. They are the only ones who can afford it.

KENDALL. You're awfully mercenary.

STOREY. I'm mature. But I am honest as well as mercenary. If you do marry me—I promise—I absolutely promise—not to live above your income——

KENDALL [*amused*]. I can't be angry with you.

STOREY. Why should you be angry with me?

KENDALL. Keeping me waiting an hour.

STOREY. At least I wasn't with another woman.

KENDALL. I suppose that will come too.

STOREY. I'll always come back to you.

KENDALL. You make me feel like a——

STOREY. Like a terminal?

KENDALL. Honestly, I wish I'd never met you.

STOREY. You don't mean that. Think of the nice times we've had together.

KENDALL. I feel you'll make me very unhappy.

STOREY. Only momentarily. And never wilfully.

KENDALL. Anyway, I wish I weren't in love with you.

STOREY. You won't be—long.

KENDALL. It's lasted now—three years.

STOREY. But most of that time your husband was alive.

KENDALL [*after a moment*]. Storey—outside of being in love with you—I'm very fond of you. I feel such fine things in you. If only you wouldn't waste yourself so, if only you'd make the effort to live up to the best in you——

STOREY. Oh, now, Kendall, don't you be fooled too. I'm living up to the best in me, right now.

KENDALL. But you potter so. You're not concentrated on anything.

STOREY. But I've a talent for pottering.

KENDALL. I feel you could do great work——

STOREY. Now don't you go on having illusions about me. I have a certain facility for turning out pretty stuff——

KENDALL. I'm sure you could do great things.

STOREY. You are mistaken. I know my limitations. Nor have I any craving for immortality. When I'm rich—when I'm married to you—I probably sha'n't write at all. I'll be—what I've always wanted to be—a prosperous dilettante.

KENDALL. I never can tell when you're joking——

STOREY. I assure you I'm perfectly serious now. What this country needs is a dilettante class, interested in art with no desire to make money out of it. Why shouldn't there be an amateur class in art, as there is in sport?

KENDALL. Is this a pose?

STOREY. I assure you it isn't. Quite the contrary. At least you can't say afterwards that I married you under false pretences. I tell you now I'm an adventurer—intellectually and morally—an *arriviste* with one virtue—honesty.

KENDALL. Well, I've got you on my hands. I suppose I'll have to make the best of you.

STOREY. You'd better— [*He rises—kisses her lightly—folds her coat about her.*]

KENDALL [*turns and watches him—amused*]. I gather you're dismissing me.

STOREY. Well, I have to do some work. [*With a gesture toward the manuscript.*]

KENDALL [*laughing*]. What?

STOREY. I haven't touched that since this morning. And Austin's coming in——

KENDALL. And Miss Grey.

STOREY. You heard me tell her I wouldn't be home.

KENDALL. I heard her say she was coming.

STOREY. What can one do? It'll be a relief to me when these two are married off.

KENDALL. To me, too.

STOREY. Are you going out to-night?

KENDALL. I don't think so.

STOREY. Suppose I ring you—5:30ish. You might dine here. I'll order dinner from downstairs.

KENDALL. All right. By the way, Storey——

STOREY. Yes?

KENDALL. It's—the end of the month. If you're a bit short—I might lend you a little.

STOREY. Ken, you demoralize me.

KENDALL. Here's a check. You can pay me when your ship comes in. [*She gives STOREY the check. He puts it on table.*]

STOREY. You *are* a darling! I suppose it's dreadful to take money from a woman. But why it's worse than taking it from a man I don't know. Do you?

KENDALL. It all depends——

STOREY. Really, Kendall, you've got to marry me right away—to save my self-respect.

KENDALL. What do you want your self-respect for?

STOREY. I haven't the least idea——

KENDALL [*slapping him*]. Half-wit . . .

STOREY [*affectionately*]. Darling . . . [*He walks out with her, returns a moment later. Goes to telephone.*] Restaurant, please—Mr. Storey speaking—I want dinner for two for to-night—seven-thirty—up here. Oysters, small ones—clear soup—supreme of chicken with mushrooms—salad—yes—yes—thank you, Frederic——

[*He hangs up, takes off his coat, puts on dressing-gown, an elaborate one, yellow silk-lined with wide sleeves and brilliant sash. Settles himself into the easy chair, puts the sewing board across its arms, making a bridge on which he puts the writing-paper and starts to create. Inspiration is halting; he lights a cigarette. The lamp is too bright. He pins a piece of newspaper over it. Something in paper attracts his attention. He takes out the pin—leans back in chair and reads it. The door-bell rings. He gets up and goes to door admitting AUSTIN LOWE. Leaves him and comes back to his chair. AUSTIN is fattish, serious, woe-begone. STOREY's manner to him is extremely friendly.*]

STOREY [*with a wave toward his work*]. I was in the middle of an immortal sentence . . .

AUSTIN. I'm sorry, old man. I *had* to see you.

STOREY. You look seedy.

AUSTIN. Didn't sleep a wink last night.

• STOREY. Cocktail?

AUSTIN [*miserably*]. Nothing.

STOREY. Do you good.

AUSTIN. I couldn't, really. Couldn't even eat my lunch.

STOREY. What's the matter? Don't tell me that discovery you made turned out to be old stuff.

AUSTIN. It's nothing to do with that.

STOREY. There's an idea. Scientist works twenty years on a scent—finally gets it. Rushes to the Science Club or wherever scientists rush when they've found something. When he gets there the boss tells him: "Sorry, old man, but Professor Funkenwangler got this yesterday—here's his cable——"

AUSTIN [*irritably*]. I tried to get you twenty times to-day. Last night, too. Where the devil've you been?

STOREY. Been? Let's see—where the devil have I been? Oh, last night I went to a party. Then on to Charmian Drew's. Know her?

AUSTIN. No.

STOREY. Very pretty girl. Got back at six this morning.

Got up in time to go to lunch to meet Stryker Collins, the English novelist. Know his stuff?

AUSTIN. No.

STOREY. Vastly over-rated, if you ask me. The heroines're always throwing things at the heroes. Never saw such nasty women.

AUSTIN. I'm awfully low to-day, Storey, old man.

STOREY [*affecting surprise*]. Low? Really? You seem so gay—— [AUSTIN gives him a woeful look.]

AUSTIN. It's about Monica.

STOREY. Monica?

AUSTIN. She's thrown me over.

STOREY. Nonsense.

AUSTIN. Says she won't marry me.

STOREY. You take that child too seriously, Austin.

AUSTIN. But she means it this time, Storey. Told me last night. Says it's all over. Gave me back—the ring. See. Here—— [*Shows him the ring which he fumbles miserably.*]

STOREY [*looking critically at the ring*]. I'm glad she did. Never was crazy about that ring. Neither was Monica, I imagine. You can return it now and get her something less—conventional. I'll go with you to Cartier's. The other day I saw a stunning oblong emerald——

AUSTIN. But don't you see! She doesn't want my ring. Any ring. She doesn't want me.

STOREY. What's her reason? For suddenly——

AUSTIN. Said when she promised to marry me she yielded to outside pressure——

STOREY. Her little mother.

AUSTIN. Said she acted against her better nature. Now she says she realizes she doesn't love me—that she never could love me. What shall I do now, Storey?

STOREY. Leave her alone for a week and—try again.

AUSTIN. The worst of it is——

STOREY. What?

AUSTIN. She loves somebody else.

STOREY. She said so?

AUSTIN. Yes.

STOREY. Who?

AUSTIN. Wouldn't tell me.

STOREY. I don't believe it.

AUSTIN. Why not?

STOREY. She'd have told *me*.

AUSTIN. You think so?

STOREY. Certainly.

AUSTIN. She would, unless——

STOREY. Unless what?

AUSTIN. Unless the man she loves—is you.

STOREY. I? You're crazy, Austin.

AUSTIN [*breathless*]. She likes you. She likes you better than me, that's plain. It's a wonder to me you *don't* marry her.

STOREY. Austin, you're losing your sense of humour. Fancy my being married to Monica. She'd leave me in six months. By which time I should certainly have left her.

AUSTIN [*wanting to be contradicted*]. I don't see why.

STOREY. She's penniless, for one thing. She couldn't stand the poverty of my menage and—neither could I.

AUSTIN. I can't understand it. You're not in love with her?

STOREY. There speaks the eternal lover. I think it strange you *are* in love with her. She's pretty—I grant you that. But, great Heavens, man—so *young*.

AUSTIN [*rapt*]. She *is* young.

STOREY. And so full of spirits!

AUSTIN. Isn't she?

STOREY. Always laughing. Like the constant ringing of chimes.

AUSTIN. It is like chimes.

STOREY. You've certainly got it bad, Austin.

AUSTIN. I can't think of anything else. It—it—obsesses me.

STOREY [*a bit wickedly*]. After all, you have your science.

AUSTIN. You think that means anything to me now? When I've lost her? I tell you I can't work since I've known Monica.

STOREY. Your researches?

AUSTIN. They're all nothing. I can't do a thing. I don't give a damn. It's only—Monica.

STOREY [*shaking his head*]. What an illusion that is about the cold mastery of scientific men! Look at you—helpless as a baby.

AUSTIN. And the worst of it is there's nothing to do. It's not like a problem—that you can work at. She just doesn't love me. And that's all there is to it. I'm sunk.

STOREY. If you want her—really want her—you can get her.

AUSTIN. That's what you always say. But it's not true.

STOREY [*lighting a cigarette*]. No doubt about it. I'm sure.

AUSTIN. But she told me—last night——

STOREY. She doesn't in the least know what she wants. Won't till after she's married. That's up to you——

AUSTIN. But she's not attracted to me.

STOREY. She doesn't understand you. She has no appreciation of your intellectual gifts.

AUSTIN [*sadly*]. That's true. My work means nothing to her.

STOREY. Why don't you make it mean something to her? Teach her to see how wonderful it is. Go on about the marvellous delicacy of your experiments.

AUSTIN. If I could only talk like you!

STOREY. That's easy.

AUSTIN. How?

STOREY. Cultivate superficiality.

AUSTIN. If she only understood me—as you do!

STOREY. She shall be made to.

AUSTIN. How?

STOREY [*lighting another cigarette*]. Maternal pressure. I'll wager you anything a starved writer can pay that Mrs. Grey doesn't know Monica's refused you.

AUSTIN. What if she did?

STOREY. She'd raise hell. You see the old lady's dreadfully afraid—of guess what?

AUSTIN. What?

STOREY. That Monica will marry *me*.

AUSTIN. There, you see. Even she's noticed it.

STOREY. A good thing, too. Might be a fine thing to persuade Mrs. Grey that *I* want to marry Monica. She'll never rest then until Monica's married to you.

AUSTIN. What makes you think so?

STOREY. Monica's mother's perfectly cracked about the idea of having you for a son-in-law. Oh, it's not your scientific eminence. It's not even your family, though of course that has something to do with it. It's your money, my friend, your lucre, your multitudinous boodle——

AUSTIN. I can hardly believe——

STOREY. Sorry, but that's what it is. The Greys are mighty hard up. Monica's been dressing shamefully of late——

AUSTIN [*truculently*]. She looks better——

STOREY. I know. Niftier in gingham than a fine lady in velvet.

AUSTIN. She looks wonderful in anything.

STOREY. How extraordinary that a little girl like Monica can make a man like you talk like a hack writer!

AUSTIN [*bristling*]. Look here, I don't quite like your tone about Monica!

STOREY. Don't misunderstand me. Oh, I'm awfully fond of her. But she is a spoiled little minx, shallow as a platter. Her lack of appreciation of you proves that.

AUSTIN [*pathetically*]. Well, she's only twenty. Sometimes I think I'm too old for her.

STOREY. You're only twenty-nine.

AUSTIN. It's not that alone. She's so gay, so full of fun. I can't—prattle, Storey. I don't follow her small talk.

STOREY. Her talk is not small. It is infinitesimal. Your microscopic training should help you.

AUSTIN. I don't do the things she likes—dance, play tennis—you know.

STOREY [*regarding him judicially*]. You're not a jazz fig-

ure, Austin. But you'd better marry her anyway. If you don't she'll run away with a tenor or something.

AUSTIN. You keep telling me to marry her as if I didn't want to. Damn it, Storey, I'd give my soul——

STOREY. I don't think that will be necessary. But you might make some other sacrifices.

AUSTIN. I'll do anything——

STOREY. Take this thing more lightly, can't you? You've fallen in love like an awkward school-boy—not like a man of the world.

AUSTIN. But I'm not a man of the world.

STOREY. Can't you act the base rôle? When Monica's around you get positively tongue-tied. All you can do is silently register adoration.

AUSTIN. I know it. I can't help it. When I do think of something to say it sounds so inadequate to me that I don't say it.

STOREY. If you'd only remember that everything's on your side. You've so much to offer.

AUSTIN. I wish I thought so.

STOREY. If you persist, you'll win her, as the military men say, by attrition.

[*"Attrition" is a good word for future use. He makes notation on Ms.*]

AUSTIN. She told me not to try to see her, not to call her on the telephone. I tell you, Storey, I don't know what to do with myself.

STOREY [*shaking his head*]. You're a great argument against celibacy, Austin, old boy.

AUSTIN. You know, Storey, I used to think—before I met Monica—that I'd never marry a girl unless she wanted me as much as I wanted her. But that was before I wanted anybody—as I want Monica. [*Passionately.*] I'd marry her on any terms, you understand? It's beyond—pride. You understand?

STOREY. Of course I understand. And I'll do everything I can to help you, believe me.

AUSTIN [*fervently*]. You're a brick, Storey.

STOREY. Now, look here. I've got to do a little work. Why don't you go around the corner to the Chemist's Club, look over some of those fascinating magazines full of algebraic formulas and come back here to dine?

AUSTIN. That's awfully good of you, Storey, really. I hate to be alone.

STOREY. I know.

AUSTIN. You're the only person I can talk to.

STOREY. Come back—say twenty minutes. I'll order dinner from downstairs.

AUSTIN. You make it so easy for your friends to impose on you, Storey. You're swell.

STOREY. Don't deceive yourself, old boy. I get a sadistic pleasure out of watching you writhe. And your pathetic reliance on me gives me a sense of superiority.

AUSTIN. Always joking!

STOREY. It's the grim truth.

AUSTIN. You're the finest—

STOREY [*hustles him to door*]. Come now, Austin, run along. See you in twenty minutes.

AUSTIN [*at door*]. Er—there's something else.

STOREY. Yes.

AUSTIN. I've been wanting to speak to you about it for some time.

STOREY. Well, spit it out.

AUSTIN. It's about money.

STOREY. My favourite subject.

AUSTIN. Er—your writing. Does it—I mean to say—does it bring you in very much?

STOREY. Not what it should. I'm caviare to the general, Austin.

AUSTIN. That's what I thought. Well—you see—I mean to say—you see—well, damn it all, I'm so rich, Storey. Won't you let me help you out occasionally?

STOREY. Of course I will.

AUSTIN [*reaching eagerly into his pocket*]. That's fine—I—

STOREY. Oh, not now. I've got a check on the table now—

I don't even know how much it is—— [*Goes to the table and unfolds check* MRS. FRAYNE *has left.*] Five hundred.

AUSTIN. For a story?

STOREY. Yes.

AUSTIN. That's more than we chemists get——

STOREY. But next time I'm broke—it'll probably be next week—I'll let you know.

AUSTIN. Any time. It'll be a pleasure.

STOREY. It's a pleasure I sha'n't deny you. So long, Austin.

AUSTIN. Good-bye, old man. Awfully good of you to let me come back.

STOREY. Don't mention it. [*AUSTIN goes out.* STOREY *goes to his armchair. There is a smile on his lips. After a moment of meditation he reaches for the telephone.*] Regent 2772—please—Mrs. Frayne—Mr. Storey—hello, Ken—I've changed my mind about dining here—let's go out somewhere—yes, I did order it but I'm going to let two other people eat it—and—Kendall—will you call me up in about twenty minutes—never mind what I say—just 'phone me. Comedy, my dear—tell you later—I'll come to your place about six-thirty—sha'n't dress, no—yes, I'm working now—oh, pretty well—not many sentences but distinguished. Good-bye, Mrs. Frayne, see you later. [*He hangs up, puts board across the arms of his chair, as before, begins to write. He sees "attrition" on his Ms. Goes to dictionary. Finds it. Goes back to his board, spelling it. Writes a few lines. Door-bell rings. He ignores it. It rings again, four short rings. Then, shouting:*] Door's open!

MONICA [*bursting in*]. Hello, darling. Working? [*She is young, vibrant, utterly charming.*]

STOREY. Trying to.

MONICA. Sorry I came?

STOREY [*drily*]. Well——!

MONICA. I don't care in the least. I'm delighted to see you. [*She puts her face against his cheek.*]

STOREY. Don't muss me.

MONICA. Just had to see you, Storey. The one person in the world I wanted to see.

STOREY. Everybody's told me that to-day. I begin to feel like a Father Confessor.

MONICA. Glad to see me? Tell the truth.

STOREY [*grumbling*]. Been trying to work all afternoon——

MONICA. You fib. You *are* glad. You know you are.

STOREY [*writing*]. Oh, I don't mind you.

MONICA. I bet you're more than glad. I bet you're thrilled, excited.

STOREY. Modest creature.

MONICA. I'm confident you're in love with me, Storey, but you're too big a fool to tell me so.

STOREY [*continuing writing*]. I thought we'd settled all that.

MONICA. You thought you did. You thought I'd quietly succumb and marry Austin.

STOREY. Oh, you're staying!

MONICA. But I'm not going to. Hear that, Storey? I'm not going to——

[*He finishes a page and starts a fresh one, putting the finished one on the tabouret beside him.*]

MONICA [*taking finished page*]. Oh, may I?

STOREY. Be through in a minute.

MONICA [*reading*]. Don't stop on my account.

STOREY [*grimly*]. Oh, well, enough of creation—— [*He throws down his pen.*]

MONICA [*absorbed*]. Oh, this is awfully interesting.

STOREY [*same tone*]. Think so, do you? [*He sounds suddenly weary.*]

MONICA. I love it. [*She reads:*] "They had been dancing and he asked her to go outside with him. They stepped out through the open French windows, crossed the lawn and walked down a narrow path between high poplars. . . . The tree-tops made hedges in the sky between which the stars grew like buttercups. Buttercups. . . ." That's lovely.

STOREY. Go on.

MONICA. "It was a most curious moon, red-bronze in colour, wafer-thin, exquisitely curved, a shaving of a moon. Courtney allowed himself to speculate to the girl beside him.

'God,' he said. Oh, excuse me, 'God,' he said, 'must be a curious person to fashion such a moon, a butcher with artistic leanings. Or was he an artist suffering from a sadistic stavism?' Which did she think. The girl thought it was slightly chilly and hadn't they better go back to the ball-room?" Oh, I think that's wonderful. So—ironic!

STOREY. You think it's wonderful?

MONICA. I think everything you write is wonderful.

STOREY. I'm sorry I can't agree with you. Scented dish-water, that's what it is. Dish-water with eau de cologne in it.

MONICA. What a funny mood you're in!

STOREY. It annoys me to have you keep prattling that my stuff's wonderful. What do you know about it? Have you ever read anything except movie magazines? Have you——?

MONICA. Oh, now, Storey, please don't scold me. Not to-day. To-day I want you to be nice to me.

STOREY [*rising*]. What's this about you and Austin?

MONICA. I can't go through with it, Storey. That's all.

STOREY. But you told me—you definitely told me—you'd made up your mind to marry him.

MONICA [*whimpering a bit*]. You're not a bit nice to-day.

STOREY. You're such an awful dumb-bell, Monica.

MONICA. I'm not. You're a dumb-bell. Here—sit down and let me get comfy—and I'll tell you all about it . . . I'm going to sit on your lap. [*She does it.*]

STOREY [*groaning*]. You're the bane of my existence, Monica.

MONICA. Now, we'll talk.

STOREY. Well?

MONICA. Storey—tell the truth—wouldn't you rather have me sitting on your lap this way than Mrs. Frayne?

STOREY. Don't get fresh, Monica. Besides, the query is totally irrelevant.

MONICA. It isn't at all. It's got everything to do with everything. I can't imagine Mrs. Frayne sitting on anybody's lap. She's too—dignified.

STOREY. No one requires you to imagine that, my dear.

MONICA [*defiantly*]. I don't like Mrs. Frayne.

STOREY. She likes you.

MONICA. I don't believe it. I'm sure she says nasty things about me.

STOREY. She doesn't discuss you. She thinks you're very pretty but adolescent.

MONICA [*with a wicked smile*]. I may be young but my thoughts are mature.

STOREY [*pretending to be shocked*]. Monica!

MONICA. No, I don't like Mrs. Frayne. She's a bad influence on you.

STOREY. Will you please stop chattering about Kendall and tell me about you and Austin?

MONICA. You hate to have me criticize her. I know it.

STOREY. I'm really very busy, Monica.

MONICA. Busy! Bless your heart, you never do a thing.

STOREY. I might if you'd marry Austin and save me worrying about you.

MONICA [*incredulously*]. Would you really let me marry him?

STOREY. Let you! My God! I pray for it.

MONICA. You'd go to church—and—watch it happen——?

STOREY. Why not?

MONICA. And go home and rub your palms and say "That's that," I suppose.

STOREY [*touched*]. Oh, now, Monica! You know I'll always be awfully fond of you.

MONICA. *Fond——!*

STOREY. Mighty lucky for you I'm not in love with you.

MONICA. Oh, I wish you were. I'd be awfully happy if you were.

STOREY. We'd probably marry and that would be the end of us. The end of you at any rate.

MONICA. Why? We'd be a charming couple.

STOREY [*abruptly*]. Tell me about you and Austin.

MONICA [*cuddling to him*]. I will.

STOREY. Well?

MONICA. Don't hurry me, darling. I'm going to stay here a long time.

STOREY. Unfortunately——

MONICA [*putting her hand over his mouth*]. Unfortunately, nothing. I'm going to stay here and dine with you and then we'll have a long talk and after that—we'll take a walk——

STOREY. And after that?

MONICA. I'll come back with you if you like. Storey, if you ruin me, will you make an honest woman of me?

STOREY. I won't marry you, Monica, no matter what you do.

MONICA [*sighing*]. Gee, Storey, you're hard to get.

STOREY. You *are* a sweet child. I'm not as indifferent to you as I pretend.

MONICA. Aren't you?

STOREY. Of course I'm not.

MONICA. Don't you want to kiss me? [*He does. She kisses him passionately.*] Oh, Storey, I'm so unhappy. [*She buries her head on his shoulder, crying.*]

STOREY [*stroking her hair*]. Why, darling?

MONICA [*muffled*]. Because nobody loves me.

STOREY. Austin loves you. He's crazy about you.

MONICA [*getting up and stamping her foot*]. Oh, don't talk to me about Austin.

STOREY. Why shouldn't I?

MONICA. Because he bores me. He bores me to death. I never want to see him again. [*There is a pause.*]

STOREY. Monica, I want to tell you something. Listen. [*He draws her to him again.*] Listen. I intend to be honest about Austin. You get me, don't you? He's so helpless—that I don't intend to take advantage of him. Besides, he's a fine fellow. Awfully sincere. Awfully honest——

MONICA. He bores me. I don't like him.

STOREY. He's inarticulate, but he's a fine brain.

MONICA. But I love you, Storey.

STOREY. Now don't be a silly child. What sort of life do you suppose we should have together?

MONICA. Cozy.

STOREY. And what'll we live on?

MONICA. I'll work.

STOREY. At what?

MONICA. I'll typewrite.

STOREY. What?

MONICA. Your stories. I'll go in the movies! I have a friend who's a director.

STOREY. Your mother would be delighted!

MONICA. By the way—I've told Mother.

STOREY. You've told Mother what?

MONICA. That I can't marry Austin because I'm in love with you.

STOREY. You didn't——!

MONICA. Mother despises you, Storey.

STOREY [*very angry*]. And you're fool enough to tell her——!

MONICA [*misunderstanding*]. It doesn't matter to me that she doesn't like you. It just makes me love you all the more——

STOREY. That's not the point. How dare you——

MONICA. Oh, that's not all I told her.

STOREY. It's quite enough——

MONICA [*in one breath*]. I told her you loved me too, and that you'd ask me to marry you and that I'd said yes. I intend to make quite a campaign, you see.

STOREY. I've a good mind to spank you!

MONICA. I thought that if I told Mother you'd asked me that you would be—sort of compromised. You see, I'm trying to get it spread around—that we're engaged.

[*He starts to speak.*]

STOREY. Now look here, Monica.

[*She puts her hand over his mouth to stifle his protest.*]

MONICA. For once don't talk, and listen to me. The fact is that I'm doing all this for your good.

STOREY. Thank you!

MONICA. For your good, Mr. Storey.

STOREY. Would you mind telling me——!

MONICA. Of course I'll tell you. You see I know, I'm just certain—that way down deep it's me you love—and not Mrs. Frayne or anybody else. Since you love me you ought to marry me.

STOREY. You've been reading again.

MONICA. You admit that the only reason you *don't* ask me is because you're poor and you think I want all sorts of frivolous things. It's just like you—you're so splendid and always thinking of other people——

STOREY [*in despair*]. Good God!

MONICA. But you misjudge me, Storey. Honestly you do. I could be awfully happy on just what you have.

STOREY. Perhaps. But *I* couldn't.

MONICA. You ought to marry a poor girl, Storey. It would stimulate you, make you work harder.

STOREY. Are you quite through?

MONICA. Not quite. I just got an idea. I think I'll 'phone an announcement of our engagement to the newspapers.

STOREY [*really frightened*]. You'll do no such thing.

MONICA [*laughing joyously*]. I've got you, Storey—I've got you at last.

STOREY. Come here. Now, come here.

MONICA. No way out of it for you, Storey. You're cooked.

STOREY. Come here! [*Leading her to sofa.*] Now sit down like a lamb and concentrate on what I'm going to tell you.

MONICA [*demurely*]. All right, teacher.

STOREY. How old are you, Monica?

MONICA. You know perfectly well. I'm twenty

STOREY. Now listen—this is serious. I'm thirty-one.

MONICA. Nice age for a man.

STOREY. Eleven years older than you. Just think when I'm forty-one—that's middle-aged, you know, Monica——

MONICA. I'll be thirty-one. Think how attractive I'll be.

STOREY. Of course you will. And I'll be—bald and wrinkled and—— Oh I know that's been said before.

MONICA. No, you won't. Your hair'll be just touched with gray. You'll look very distinguished.

STOREY. I'm too old for you, Monica.

MONICA. And yet you want me to marry Austin. He's as old as the hills.

STOREY. He's two years younger than I am.

MONICA. Well, he seems lots older. He's so correct—like an old deacon.

STOREY. You talk outrageously when he's around.

MONICA. I love to shock him. He's such a Puritan!

STOREY. You've got to stop reproaching me, before him, for not having an affair with you. It gets on my nerves.

MONICA. I believe I shock you, too, Storey.

STOREY. Not in the least. But I hate to see the poor fellow suffer.

MONICA. Austin's so literal. Absolutely no glimmering of humour. Oh! This will make you laugh—wait till I show you!

[*She runs back to get her bag, dredges in it.*]

STOREY. Nobody in love has a sense of humour!

MONICA [*holding up magazine*]. Look what he sent me——

STOREY [*taking the austere covered pamphlet*]. Proceedings of the American Chemical Society——

MONICA. With an article by Austin in it—look—here——

STOREY [*reading*]. "A new method of separating atoms and ions which are chemically similar but have different weights by diffusion—including the separation of radium from the barium residues." Tells you what to expect, doesn't it?

MONICA. Now whatever do you think Austin——!

STOREY [*intent on the article*]. This is very touching, Monica.

MONICA. I know, but—why it's nearly all figures—it would take an expert to——

[*He hasn't removed his eyes from the article; she stands looking at it with him.*]

STOREY. Has a brilliant climax, this thing.

MONICA. Climax! Where?

STOREY. There. It's an *equation*—can't you see!

MONICA. Oh, Storey, come now! I don't believe you have the faintest idea what it's all about.

STOREY. Of course I haven't. I've had a shallow literary education. But I *can* see this—that in this chaos here in the first part of his article—you see—in this abracadabra—this forest of figures—Austin had scented somewhere, an equation lurking. And he's found it, damn him, dredged it out of the morass, lifted it into clear light—and there it is!

MONICA. Oh, Storey!

STOREY. I'm perfectly serious, Monica. And I think it was very sweet of him to send you this—if you had any imagination you'd see—it's a tender, a beautiful gesture—this [*tapping paper*] this is *his lyric*, Monica.

MONICA. I prefer lyrics that rhyme.

STOREY. An equation is a rhyme—a perfect rhyme, subtler and harder to find than any you'll see in *my* effusions—— [*Flinging the thing away.*] How do you know what hope for the future is hidden in this little prose-poem?

MONICA. You're so generous about others, Storey. I love you for it!

STOREY. Don't be too sure of my motive. Perhaps it's because I want to get conveniently rid of *you*!

[MONICA presents herself before him, shaking her head stubbornly, her hands crossed behind her back.]

MONICA. It's no good, Storey! You might as well give up!

STOREY. Now please be serious, Monica. Austin'll make you a wonderful husband. You're lovely and his money will provide you with the exquisite background your beauty requires. . . . And he's *good*!

MONICA [*sitting on sofa, piteously*]. I just can't do it, Storey. Please don't ask me to.

STOREY. He won't bother you. Spends ages in his laboratory, you know.

MONICA. I'm sure he doesn't sleep in the laboratory.

STOREY. Oh now, Monica. Really, you're impossible.

MONICA. Am I so terrible, Storey? Don't *you* love me at all?

STOREY. I'm frightfully fond of you—crazy about you.

MONICA. Then why do you keep me in suspense like this?

STOREY. Monica, you're so young. I know so much more about life than you do. I know what would happen—I know this feeling you have for me now—won't last.

MONICA. But I swear—I'll never love anybody else. If you don't marry me—I'll go into a convent. I swear.

STOREY. I'm going to marry Mrs. Frayne—if she'll have me.

MONICA [*passionately*]. Just because she's rich! You know you wouldn't think of marrying her if she weren't—the trouble with you is—you're damned selfish.

STOREY. Of course I am.

MONICA. Just admitting it doesn't do any good. You like to go around and be petted by people. And your silly little comforts. You see, I know, deep down, you're fonder of me than of any one. Just as I know that I'm fonder of you than I ever shall be of any one——[*He makes a sudden move toward her; is irresistibly attracted, stops.*] Obey that impulse.

STOREY. It's ridiculous. Impossible. Ridiculous.

MONICA. Why not?

STOREY. You're a silly child. You don't know anything about anything. You don't know what you want, really.

MONICA. Yes, I do know.

STOREY [*disturbed*]. I warn you, Monica—if you keep this up I *will* marry you.

MONICA. You won't be sorry if you do, Storey. I swear it's for you as much as for myself. I want to save you.

STOREY. Save me?

MONICA. I want you to live up to the best that's in you.

STOREY. My God, Monica, I believe you have the makings of a good woman.

MONICA. You ought to marry me for the sake of your art. If you marry Mrs. Frayne you'll be so comfortable you won't write a thing.

STOREY. I am thirty-one and in full possession of my senses. It would be positively immoral for me to marry you.

MONICA. But it would be more moral than anything else you could do to me.

STOREY [*looking at her with perplexity. The door-bell rings*]. Thank God! Austin.

[*He jumps up.*]

MONICA [*terrified*]. Austin!

STOREY. Well, I think it's Austin.

[*The bell rings again.*]

MONICA. Don't answer. He'll go away.

STOREY. I couldn't do that.

MONICA. Did you know he was coming?

STOREY. I wasn't sure.

MONICA. Promise you'll get rid of him—promise.

STOREY. I'll do what I can——[*Bell rings.*] Why doesn't he come in. The door's open.

[*He goes out. MONICA walks about petulantly. She flings a pillow violently into a corner. AUSTIN comes in followed by STOREY.*]

MONICA. Hello, Anti Genesis.

STOREY. Anti what?

MONICA. Don't you know my little pet-name for Austin? Anti Genesis.

STOREY. How come? Eh?

AUSTIN. Monica actually believed the world began in the Garden of Eden.

MONICA [*slyly*]. Austin disillusioned me about the book of Genesis.

AUSTIN [*seriously*]. She'd never heard of the nebular theory.

STOREY. Monica!—Oh well, you mustn't mind her, Austin. It's the fashion nowadays to be flippant. Monica gets it from me. The difference is—my flippancy is a sort of defense. Monica's is a boast. The nice thing though about Monica is she doesn't know anything. Gives one a pleasant sense of omniscience——[*The telephone rings. STOREY answers it.*] Yes—oh, hello—waiting for me?—why, our engagement was for Tuesday, wasn't it?—Dear me, is *this* Tuesday?—How awfully stupid of me—the truth is I've been so lost in my

work—yes, I can make it easily by seven—I'll be right over—Good-bye. [*He hangs up.*] Certainly lucky you dropped in, Austin.

MONICA [*sensing something*]. What's happened now?

STOREY. The fact is, my dear, I can't dine with you after all.

MONICA [*furious*]. Oh, can't you?

STOREY. I had no idea it was Tuesday. I thought it was Monday.

MONICA. Of course when one works as hard as you do one is apt to forget the day of the week!

STOREY [*to Austin*]. I've ordered dinner for two. Would you mind dining with Monica instead of me?

AUSTIN [*overjoyed*]. Right here?

STOREY. I've ordered a delicious dinner from downstairs.

AUSTIN. I'd love to. That is, if Monica——

MONICA [*mechanically*]. Of course.

STOREY. I've really got to dash. Austin, mind lending me a dollar for taxi fare? Don't believe I've got a cent with me.

AUSTIN. Of course. [*He takes out a bill and hands it to STOREY.*]

STOREY. One thing about Austin. He's not one of those millionaires who never has any money with him.

AUSTIN. Can give you more. Here's a twenty.

STOREY. Well, perhaps I'd better. [*Takes it.*] So long, children. [*To AUSTIN.*] You'll find everything ready for a cocktail in the kitchenette.

MONICA. Are you coming back?

STOREY. Might. I'll 'phone you.

AUSTIN. I'm not very good at mixing cocktails.

STOREY. And you a chemist——!

MONICA. This is a dirty trick, Storey.

STOREY [*to AUSTIN*]. You'll find a recipe in the kitchenette.

AUSTIN. Will I? You'll have to help me, Monica. [*He goes past STOREY into hallway.*]

MONICA [*white with anger*]. You're dining with Mrs. Frayne.

STOREY. Yes. In five years you'll thank me. In less——

MONICA. All right for you, Storey!

STOREY. Good-bye, darling. Be nice to him. [*He goes out. He can be heard saying, "So long, Austin," as he exits.*

MONICA moves down-stage; AUSTIN reappears with a cocktail shaker.]

AUSTIN. It doesn't say how much absinthe or how much vermouth——[MONICA says nothing. Her face is set in misery. AUSTIN comes down a little. He stands awkwardly holding the cocktail mixer by the neck. Wistfully:] I don't know—do you put absinthe or do you put vermouth——

[*She turns away impatiently. The curtain falls.*]

ACT II

SCENE 1.—*The same.*

TIME—8:30. *Two hours after the fall of the first act curtain. [AUSTIN and MONICA are discovered at the gate-legged table, finishing dinner. MONICA dallies with a dessert. AUSTIN watches her, wondering what to say.]*

AUSTIN [*finally*]. Will you have some more coffee?

MONICA. No, thanks. [*There is another pause.*]

AUSTIN [*mournfully*]. It's—it's jolly to be sitting here and eating like this.

MONICA [*mechanically*]. Isn't it?

AUSTIN. It is for me, anyway. [*As she says nothing.*] I suppose you're—bored.

MONICA. Why, I'm not.

AUSTIN. I wish I knew how to amuse you, Monica.

MONICA. You're a dear, Austin. You're far too nice for me.

AUSTIN. Too nice for you. . . .

MONICA. You are, really. You're a great man. And awfully modest and nice. I'm just a restless little nobody who doesn't know what she wants.

AUSTIN. You're fairly certain about what you don't want——

MONICA. I'm afraid I know what I want too, Austin.

AUSTIN. I wish I were fluent, like Storey. I wish I could talk, like Storey.

MONICA. What would you say?

AUSTIN. I'd tell you I love you.

MONICA. But you've told me that. And I've told you that I don't admire your choice.

AUSTIN. I know. [*There is a pause.*]

MONICA. There's no reason why we can't be friends.

AUSTIN. That's like telling a starving man—there's no reason he can't look at the food in a baker's window.

MONICA. Why Austin, you're brilliant to-night.

AUSTIN [*emboldened by his success*]. I feel that if I could find the words—— Somewhere there must be the words that would say what I feel for you. And once you knew what I feel, I feel you would love me.

MONICA [*half-listening*]. I wonder——

AUSTIN. Yes. I feel that. What I say to you is banal, trite. I have no gift of speech. I know it. I—I'm dumb.

MONICA [*touched, patting his hand*]. You are a dear, Austin. I'm very fond of you.

AUSTIN. Last night you said—you never wanted to see me again.

MONICA [*rising, walking about the room*]. Last night? I was tired, upset——

AUSTIN. You said——

MONICA. Please, Austin, don't talk to me any more about last night.

AUSTIN [*meekly*]. All right, Monica. [*One of those pauses.*] Would you—would you like to go to a theatre?

MONICA. No. Thank you.

AUSTIN. Storey says Gertrude Lawrence——

MONICA. I've seen her.

AUSTIN. We could go to the opera. My mother has a box——

MONICA. Not to-night, Austin, thanks. Storey said he'd telephone, didn't he?

AUSTIN. Did he?

MONICA. I think he did.

[A pause. MONICA lights a cigarette. Walks about restlessly.]

AUSTIN. I believe Storey's dining with Mrs. Frayne.

MONICA. Is he?

AUSTIN. Yes.

MONICA. Austin?

AUSTIN. Yes?

MONICA. Do you like Mrs. Frayne?

AUSTIN. Yes. I think she's a lovely woman. Don't you?

MONICA. She probably was.

AUSTIN. I wonder—will Storey marry her?

MONICA. I've no idea.

AUSTIN. I think she's in love with him.

MONICA. Why not?

AUSTIN. I think it would be a good match. Don't you?

MONICA. How can I tell?

AUSTIN. Storey sees her every day.

MONICA. Can't we really find any one to talk about except Storey?

AUSTIN. Well, you're so keen about him.

MONICA. What makes you think that?

AUSTIN. Aren't you?

MONICA. I despise him.

AUSTIN. But last night—

MONICA. Last night doesn't matter. To-day does.

AUSTIN [*very happy*]. Then you——!

MONICA. I despise him. [*She slumps into the chair near the tabouret where STOREY has put the check KENDALL has given him.*]

AUSTIN. Then perhaps——[*He moves toward her uncertainly, pauses, does not know what to say. She is lost in a dream, does not hear him.*] Then perhaps——

MONICA. Perhaps what?

AUSTIN. If there's no one else—I mean if you're not in love with Storey—or any one else—perhaps——

MONICA [*almost in tears*]. Please, Austin—be a darling and don't—don't make love to me.

AUSTIN. I can't help it. Isn't it awful? I can't make love to you—and I don't know what else to talk about.

MONICA. Talk to me—talk to me about evolution.

AUSTIN. But you said you preferred the Garden of Eden.

MONICA. To—primeval chaos. Yes. Don't you? Isn't a nice garden full of wild flowers better than a lot of—slime?

AUSTIN [*distressed*]. But the Bible isn't true.

MONICA. What of it? Adam and Eve were such a *nice* couple.

AUSTIN. I can't see the use in talking about anything—that isn't true.

MONICA [*with a sigh*]. That shuts out so many subjects.

AUSTIN [*hesitating*]. Did you—did you get the—my—the article I sent you?

MONICA. Oh yes, thanks! How awfully clever you are!

AUSTIN [*greatly flustered, blushing*]. Oh—it was just—that's what I've been working on a good deal lately—a new method of separating radium——

MONICA [*gently*]. Of course I don't pretend to have understood it——

AUSTIN. That's the trouble—unless you know the vocabulary of science it doesn't mean much—like giving the score of a symphony to a person who can't read it.

MONICA. I know. I'm terribly ignorant, Austin.

AUSTIN. You think what I do is awfully dull, don't you? If you'd come with me sometimes to the laboratory—I'd like to show you—it's really awfully interesting—it's exciting.

MONICA. Oh, for you!

AUSTIN. No, for anybody—Monica, I wish you'd let me read you something——

MONICA. From your article?

AUSTIN. No. From a book I've brought you.

MONICA. Oh! Thank you, Austin. What's the book?

AUSTIN [*producing it*]. It's by Bertrand Russell——

MONICA [*a bit let down*]. Oh!

AUSTIN. You know who he is, don't you?

MONICA [*doubtfully*]. Well, I've heard of him.

AUSTIN. Well, he's just one of the greatest men alive, that's all.

MONICA [*touched by his eagerness; she pats his arm*]. Is he, Austin?

AUSTIN. I came across this passage the other day—I marked it—I thought—the minute I read it—"I *must* get this for Monica!"

MONICA [*peering over at book*]. "Mysticism and Logic." What a nice title! Ordinarily you'd never think of putting those two together, would you? [*But her thoughts wander off to STOREY.*]

AUSTIN. They're a lot of essays—this one's about mathematics. [*Reading*]. "Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of painting or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show. The true spirit of delight, the exaltation, the sense of being more than man, which is the touchstone of the highest excellence is to be found in mathematics as surely as in poetry." [*The cadence of AUSTIN'S voice, his profound sincerity and the beauty of the passage itself affect MONICA—as a bit of sad music might. She is quite rapt. But AUSTIN feels suddenly unsure.*] Interesting, isn't it?

MONICA. Oh, yes! Do go on!

AUSTIN. "Remote from human passions, remote even from the pitiful facts of nature, the generations have gradually created an ordered cosmos, where pure thought can dwell as in its natural home, and where one, at least, of our nobler impulses can escape from the dreary exile of the actual world." [*He stops a moment to look at her and finds her eyes full of tears.*]

AUSTIN. Monica! You're crying!

MONICA. I wish I could do that!

AUSTIN. What?

MONICA. Escape from the dreary exile of the actual world.

AUSTIN. Aren't you happy, Monica?

MONICA. Not very. Why don't you marry somebody else, somebody worthy of you?

AUSTIN. Whom?

MONICA. That awfully clever girl. You know, that girl I met you with. You told me she was a research chemist. What's a research chemist?

AUSTIN. A person who engages in chemical research.

MONICA. Oh!—Well, why don't you marry *her*, Austin? She seemed awfully nice.

AUSTIN. She *is* nice.

MONICA. And I suppose she adores you.

AUSTIN. Yes. She does like me.

MONICA. There you are!

AUSTIN [*shaking his head*]. No.

MONICA. Why not?

AUSTIN. For one thing—she knows too much for me.

MONICA. Ho! Vain!

AUSTIN. She wears woolen stockings.

MONICA. Ah, Austin, *you are* a funny man. [*Looking at him closely.*] I believe you're quite serious. You've no sense of humour, Austin. Sometimes—it's delicious.

AUSTIN. I prefer you, Monica.

MONICA. For a man who lives by his brain—you're awfully illogical, Austin.

AUSTIN. I know I am. I've tried to reason you—out of my—consciousness. I can't do it.

MONICA. Well, I'm as stupid as you are. Stupider.

AUSTIN. Why?

MONICA. For—loving him.

AUSTIN. Loving whom?

MONICA. Storey.

AUSTIN. Storey!

MONICA. Of course. Who else?

AUSTIN [*altogether bewildered*]. But—but you just said—you despised him.

MONICA [*helplessly*]. Oh, Austin.—[*She covers her face with her hands.*]

AUSTIN. I don't understand you at all, Monica.

MONICA. You really shouldn't try, Austin——

[*She gets up, her dress catches in the tabouret, overturning it. He rights it, picking up the check and papers.*]

AUSTIN [*picking up the things*]. How careless Storey is—leaving a check lying around like this.

MONICA. A check? Didn't know he had a check.

AUSTIN. Five hundred dollars for a story.

MONICA. Five hundred? Why he didn't tell me. Let me see it. [*She takes check, looks at it and sees MRS. FRAYNE'S signature. Her fingers clutch over it. Casually:*] How do you know he got it for a story?

AUSTIN. He told me. I asked him whether he needed money.

MONICA. He did, of course!

AUSTIN. He said he didn't—because he'd just had this check.

MONICA [*bitterly, crumpling the check*]. The highest bidder!

AUSTIN [*alarmed*]. Here, what are you doing——?

MONICA. I'm sorry. [*She returns check to him, he straightens it, refolds it neatly. Can't help seeing the name, looks at MONICA, whose eyes do not meet his. Puts check back.*]

AUSTIN. Well—why not?

MONICA. I think it's—beastly.

AUSTIN. As they'll probably marry soon—I don't see any harm in it.

MONICA [*passionately*]. They sha'n't marry!

AUSTIN. Monica—do you want to marry Storey yourself?

MONICA. Storey's in love with me.

AUSTIN. He isn't. He told me so.

MONICA. When?

AUSTIN. Just before you came.

MONICA. He lied.

AUSTIN. Why should he lie? I asked him to tell me the truth.

MONICA. He did lie. You wait. You'll see.

AUSTIN. He wouldn't take money from Mrs. Frayne—like this—if——

MONICA. You're naïve, Austin.

AUSTIN. I don't understand. I don't understand Storey. Why he should lie——

MONICA. She's trying to buy him.

AUSTIN [*a little bitterly*]. He seems willing to sell.

MONICA. He has no character. Not an ounce. No backbone——

AUSTIN. And yet—you want him.

MONICA. Yes. Worse luck——

AUSTIN. I wish I'd never met you, Monica.

MONICA [*snapping up the check again*]. Money! Money, Austin! [*Abruptly.*] I'm through with him.

AUSTIN. I should think you'd have more—pride.

MONICA. I'm off him for life. I swear it, Austin. Try me. Test me.

AUSTIN. How do you mean?

MONICA. Make love to me. Do something. You'll see.

AUSTIN. You know, Monica, I—I'm crazy about you. I don't have to tell you——

MONICA. Propose to me.

AUSTIN. You know how I feel.

MONICA. Are your intentions honourable?

AUSTIN. What do you mean?

MONICA. You still want to marry me, don't you?

AUSTIN. Of course. What else?

MONICA. I accept.

AUSTIN. Monica! Really?

MONICA. Yes.

AUSTIN. You'll—marry me?

MONICA [*suddenly colourless*]. If you like, Austin.

AUSTIN [*overjoyed, advancing toward her*]. Monica! Can I—can't I——?

MONICA [*drawing away*]. No, Austin——!

AUSTIN. I mean—can I tell everybody?

MONICA. Oh! Of course. Why not?

AUSTIN. I'll try to make you happy, Monica.

MONICA [*with an impulse to cry*]. Thanks, Austin. [*The door-bell rings.*]

AUSTIN. I wonder who that is.

MONICA. Must be Storey.

AUSTIN. And Mrs. Frayne.

[*There is a knock on the inside door.*]

STOREY [*off*]. It's only me. [*He comes in.*] Thought I'd warn you.

AUSTIN. Hello, Storey!

STOREY. Hello, Archimedes. Well, Miss Grey—[MONICA turns her back on him and walks upstage.] Nice dinner?

AUSTIN. Fine.

STOREY. Kendall and I dined at the Colony. [*Looking from one to the other.*] What are you depressed about? Eh?

AUSTIN. We're not depressed. That is—I'm not.

STOREY. Well, you act like it. What's the matter, Monica?

AUSTIN [*as MONICA turns away*]. Monica's just accepted me.

STOREY. Really? No—really?

AUSTIN [*doubtfully*]. That's what she said.

STOREY. Splendid. I congratulate you, Austin. I congratulate you both. Austin—mind if I kiss the bride?

[*He turns to kiss her.*]

MONICA [*fiercely*]. Don't come near me!

STOREY. What's the matter?—Austin——

AUSTIN. She's a little upset—who wouldn't be?

STOREY. Well!

AUSTIN. Where's Mrs. Frayne?

STOREY. Gone home to dress. Too bad Monica's in such a singular mood. Kendall wants us to go on a party.

MONICA. I want to go home. Austin, take me home.

STOREY. Oh, come now, Monica, be a sport. Now you're finally engaged to Austin—that's all the more reason to celebrate. You both run along and dress and we'll all meet here at eleven o'clock. Go to that new coloured cabaret in Harlem. Kendall's sending champagne——

MONICA. I don't want her champagne.

STOREY. Because you haven't tasted it. I had some at dinner. Marvellous.

MONICA. I tell you I don't want to go.

STOREY. Austin, exert your new-found authority. Make her behave.

AUSTIN. If she wants to go home——

STOREY. That's a bad way to start, Austin. If you begin by giving her her own way, she'll bully you all your life.

MONICA [*bitterly*]. Yes, Austin, listen to him. Do what *he* tells you. The authority! The philosopher. Knows everything. Tells everybody what to do, how to behave——

STOREY. Of course. My own behaviour is so bad I can point the path of righteousness to other people. The drunkard lecturing on temperance——

[*There is a pause. AUSTIN'S conquest has not made him happy. MONICA stands still, undecided, trembling with anger. STOREY alone remains imperturbable. He rather enjoys the situation.*]

AUSTIN. Guess we'll go home——

STOREY. The truth is, children, I'm a little tight. Ever get drunk, Austin?

AUSTIN. Once. Long time ago.

STOREY. Remember how it felt?

AUSTIN. Like *mal de mer*.

STOREY. Must have been bad stuff. Wait till you taste Kendall's champagne. It gives you ultimate sight, ultimate comprehension——

AUSTIN. And a head in the morning.

STOREY. But isn't it worth it? Wonderful illusions of grandeur——

AUSTIN. What's the good of illusions?

STOREY. Make reality bearable.

MONICA [*suddenly*]. I think they make it more difficult.

AUSTIN. Well, Monica——

MONICA [*to STOREY*]. Pay our respects to Mrs. Frayne. Tell her we're grateful for her invitation but that we can't take advantage of her hospitality to-night.

STOREY. For pity's sake, Monica, stop talking like an etiquette-book.

AUSTIN. Monica's right. It *would* be better——

STOREY. Oh, come now. Have a heart, both of you.

MONICA. I don't see why you want *us* when you have Mrs. Frayne.

STOREY. Of course I want you. I feel gay to-night!

MONICA. Be gay with Mrs. Frayne!

STOREY. Be nice, now, Monica. I've a peculiar feeling about to-night—that it's a sort of valedictory, a sort of farewell. . . . After to-night, things won't be the same, life won't be the same.

AUSTIN [*gloomily*]. I hope not.

STOREY. You know what I mean—you and Monica'll get married . . . and, I hope, Kendall and I. We'll be stolid, married people. We'll get old. We'll change. We'll drift apart—am I getting sentimental? Well, why not? Be nice, Monica, for once——

MONICA [*defiantly*]. All right!

STOREY. You're a dear.

AUSTIN [*worried*]. If you're tired, Monica——

MONICA. No, I've decided. I'm in great spirits now, Storey. All excited. Come on, Austin. [*She runs out.*]

AUSTIN [*shaking his head*]. I don't understand her.

STOREY. If you did—you'd disown her. . . . Come back soon. I'll be lonely.

[AUSTIN goes out. In a moment MONICA thrusts her head inside the door and speaks in a loud whisper.]

MONICA. I'll be right back.

STOREY. Don't you dare. [*She makes a face at him and disappears. After a moment he goes to window in the left wall to watch for their departure. He feels a sense of loss for MONICA. Is worried by this mood. Goes to the telephone.*] Regent 2772—please—yes—hello—Mrs. Frayne please—Mr. Storey—hello, Kendall?—what're you doing?—nearly finished?—I want you to come sooner, I'm lonely—want to see you—am I?—unusually what?—oh, ardent—I don't know—feel funny to-night—in the grip of a peculiar

emotion—I don't know—when you come I'll describe it to you—by the way, Monica and Austin Lowe're engaged—they've just left—yes, I want consolation—[*The door-bell rings.*] Excuse me—what did you say? [*The door-bell rings again.*] There's someone at the door—I've no idea—do come as soon as you can, will you, Ken?—And don't forget the champagne. Bye dear. [*He hangs up, rushes to door, disappears, returns, following MONICA.*] What did you do this for? [*It is obvious that STOREY is a little frightened; he is very fond of her just now.*]

MONICA. I persuaded Austin—as he lives uptown and I live down—to let me go home alone.

STOREY. You're crazy.

MONICA. I wanted to see you alone—to warn you——

STOREY. Suppose Austin saw you.

MONICA. It can't be helped.

STOREY. But it's cruel. You just told him you'd marry him.

MONICA. I had a moment of hating you, of utterly despising you.

STOREY. Go right away. I warn you.

MONICA. I saw that check.

STOREY. What check?

MONICA. Mrs. Frayne's for five hundred dollars. Is that your monthly stipend? Or is it weekly?

STOREY. Monica, go away. I've got to dress.

MONICA [*aware of her hold on him*]. What's the matter, Storey? [*She stands very close to him.*] What's the matter?

STOREY [*seizing her in his arms*]. Little darling. . . . [*He kisses her passionately.*]

MONICA. You do love me, don't you, Storey? It's me you love.

STOREY. This isn't very nice, Monica. It's not at all nice.

MONICA. But, Storey, there's no reason in the world why we shouldn't. We're neither of us married or anything——

STOREY. Austin!

MONICA. Oh, Austin!

STOREY. Kendall.

MONICA. Oh, Kendall!

STOREY. I feel funny about Austin. He's—so—helpless. He's so—in love with you.

MONICA. What about me?

STOREY. When you came in just now and told me you were engaged I felt a quick pain.

MONICA [*delighted*]. Did you?

STOREY. I felt suddenly as if nothing could ever make you up to me.

MONICA. You didn't look it. You seemed to take it—quite casually.

STOREY. I'm glad you came back. I want to tell you now, I *do* love you. . . .

MONICA. Tell me. . . .

STOREY. You're rare and exquisite, precious.

MONICA. You're always laughing at me.

STOREY. I know.

MONICA. Make love to me, Storey.

STOREY. I never really forget you. You're never out of my mind. Your gaiety, your sadness, your lovely youth. Your dear laughter—when you laugh it's like the beginning of the world, before sorrow and death came—

MONICA. Darling.

STOREY. I am old, dearest one.

MONICA. Old! You're not.

STOREY. I am. There's someone else inside me—a second man—a cynical, odious person, who keeps watching me, who keeps listening to what I say, grinning and sophisticated, horrid. . . . He never lets me be—this other man. . . .

MONICA. Kill him.

STOREY. I can't kill him. He'll outlive me.

MONICA [*nestling to him*]. I'll kill him for you.

STOREY. You can't. Even now he's looking at me. He's mocking me. He's saying: "You damn fool, talking nonsense to this girl—pretending you want her above everything. You're making love to her because words come easily to you. But really you wouldn't get up early in the morn-

ing for her. You like to touch her because she's young and firm and lovely. . . ."

MONICA. Don't Storey.

STOREY. "You wouldn't mind having her but after that——"

MONICA. Storey, listen darling, I know you're fine and decent.

STOREY. He hears you say: "I'm fine and decent." And he says: "The illusion of an adolescent, of a love-struck girl. . . ."

MONICA. I'll beat him, Storey—I'll beat him.

STOREY. I wish you could, honey.

MONICA. I just needed to know that you love me—tell me it again. Let me hear you say it again.

STOREY. I love you.

MONICA. The way you said it before.

STOREY. I'm afraid I can't now.

MONICA. Storey. . . .

STOREY. You see how capricious I am.

MONICA. But you just said it. And when you did I knew it was true.

STOREY. It probably was—then.

MONICA. A minute ago!

STOREY [*lightly*]. A minute, a year, a century—what's the difference?

MONICA. But, Storey, I must believe in your love for me. *I must!*

STOREY. Why?

MONICA. Because I've got to believe in something. And if you don't love me—what is there?

STOREY. My dear child. You—*baby!*

MONICA. Don't turn me down, Storey.

[*There is a pause. STOREY considers.*]

STOREY. I want you to go away—and marry Austin—and don't come back to see me alone again—ever.

MONICA. I won't. I tell you I won't.

STOREY. But don't you understand? I'm crazy about you. Do you think I'm made of wood?

MONICA. Why don't you take me, Storey?

[*A pause, he is nonplussed.*]

STOREY. My God, child. . . .

MONICA. I'd rather you married me but if you don't want to,—well——

STOREY. Won't you allow me one shred of decency? I want to be loyal to Austin. I want to protect you——

MONICA. I don't want to be protected. Besides, it's all a pose. You want to marry Kendall Frayne so you can have lots of money.

STOREY. What's the use?

MONICA. It's true. You talk about decency. With that check lying there. . . . You ought to be ashamed, Storey.

STOREY. I'm not in the least ashamed. . . .

MONICA. You're just one of those men who go around eating fine dinners and having a good time—a parasite, Storey.

STOREY. That's what everybody's trying to be in one way or another. Mine's as good as any.

MONICA. Instead of escaping from all this life and—and fighting your own battles with me by your side to help you.

STOREY [*accompanying himself on the piano*]. Sounds like a popular song. [*Hums*] "With me by your side to help you——"

MONICA. For pity's sake, Storey, how did you get this way? You couldn't have been always like this!

STOREY. Oh, no. I went through the idealistic stage. I used to sit in a garret and believe in Socialism. I used to commit realistic fiction and moonlit poetry. I dreamed——

MONICA. I want to bring back those dreams.

STOREY. Why? What for?

MONICA. You must have been lovely then, Storey. . . .

STOREY. Oh, I was! Lovely!

MONICA [*hurt*]. Storey!

STOREY. Lovely, I dreamed badly and followed the Cults. It didn't take me long to find out how easy it is to starve on Idealism. I had facility and there was a ready market for facility. I got five thousand dollars for writing a white-

washed biography of a millionaire sweat-shop owner. That started me. . . . I took the money and went to Italy—and I had a *very good* time.

MONICA. But Storey—you *must* believe in *something*—don't you ever regret—don't you ever wish——?

STOREY. Regret? No. Not in the least. Why should I? I'd do it all over again.

MONICA. I can see that horrid second man in your eyes now laughing. . . .

STOREY [*rather gently*]. You amuse him.

MONICA. You wait! I'm going to beat him—in spite of you.

STOREY [*swayed for a moment, by the possibility*]. He's got a terrific start on you, Monica.

MONICA [*very confident now*]. Trust me. Leave him to me. . . . [*whispering*]. We'll be happy yet, sweetheart!

STOREY [*taking her in his arms*]. God knows I've done my best. . . ! [*Their embrace lasts several seconds. The door-bell rings. STOREY, a bit grimly:*] Lucky for you, young lady——

MONICA. Don't go.

STOREY. Got to. Run home and dress—go upstairs and out through my bedroom.

MONICA [*to stairs*]. All right. But I'm not worried about Kendall now. I'm not worried about anything——

[*The door-bell rings insistently. She runs upstairs and disappears. STOREY exits to open the door. For a moment the stage is deserted.*]

STOREY [*off*]. Oh, from Mrs. Frayne? Thank you!

[*He returns, carrying a hamper of champagne. He puts it on the table. Lifts the cloth covering the bottles. There is a note addressed to him. He takes it out of the envelope.*]

STOREY [*reading*]. For a good time for all. . . .

[*For a moment this symbol of KENDALL'S generosity makes him hate himself. . . . The curtain slowly falls.*]

SCENE 2.—*A lapse of two hours. It is now eleven o'clock. MRS. FRAYNE is discovered at the piano. She is playing the waltz from Strauss's "Rosenkavalier." After a moment she stops and then plays a few bars of a popular sentimental song from music on the piano. The door-bell rings. She rises and goes to open the door. A splendid figure, "majestic" but graceful. She wears a black velvet evening dress cut very low. Fine arms, columnar throat, rather like Sargent's portrait of "Madame X." KENDALL goes out into the hallway and returns in a moment followed by AUSTIN. He is in evening-dress. His manner with KENDALL at first is embarrassed and hesitant. Gradually, however, she puts him at ease; she has that sort of manner.*

KENDALL. Storey's dressing. I'm the first one here.

AUSTIN. Monica's not come yet?

KENDALL. No. Cigarette?

AUSTIN. Er—thanks. [*She lights it for him.*] Thanks.

KENDALL. You and I are the only prompt ones.

AUSTIN. Yes. . . .

KENDALL. Do you know what time it is?

AUSTIN [*looking*]. Ten minutes past eleven.

KENDALL. I was here promptly at eleven. Storey hadn't even begun to dress.

AUSTIN. He hadn't!

KENDALL. I'm awfully glad you came. It was lonesome. [*She smiles at him.*]

AUSTIN. I—I'm glad I found you.

KENDALL. Why do I never see you?

AUSTIN. Er—see me?

KENDALL. Storey talks about you all the time. You're one of the few people he respects. I always ask him to bring you to my house but you never came.

AUSTIN. I'm in the laboratory such a lot.

KENDALL. I know. Still I do wish you'd come some time—and bring Miss Grey. . . .

[*She notices him staring at MONICA'S coloured scarf which is lying across a chair.*]

KENDALL. What is it?

AUSTIN. That scarf.

KENDALL. You know it?

AUSTIN. It's—it's Monica's.

KENDALL. You dined here with her—didn't you?

AUSTIN. Yes. I did.

KENDALL. Well, then——

AUSTIN. She wore it when I left with her.

KENDALL. Didn't you take her home?

AUSTIN. She told me to go home alone—to save time.

KENDALL. Well, she probably ran back to tell Storey something.

AUSTIN [*bitterly*]. She probably did. It must have taken a long time because—when you came, Storey hadn't even begun to dress.

KENDALL [*after a moment*]. I think you can trust Storey.

AUSTIN. Can I?

KENDALL. He told me over the 'phone—you and Miss Grey are engaged.

AUSTIN. There's something funny about it.

KENDALL. There's something funny about most things.

AUSTIN [*warming to her*]. Mrs. Frayne——

KENDALL. Call me Kendall.

AUSTIN. Thank you. I wonder—I wonder if Storey tells me everything. I mean—about Monica and himself.

KENDALL. Perhaps he doesn't know everything.

AUSTIN. You mean—perhaps he's in love with her and doesn't know it?

KENDALL. Doesn't know it or won't admit it—even to himself. Perhaps.

[*There is a pause.*]

AUSTIN [*abruptly*]. Are you going to marry Storey?

KENDALL. I don't know.

AUSTIN [*naïvely*]. I wish you would.

KENDALL. It would solve your problem, wouldn't it? It might complicate mine.

AUSTIN. I'm not even sure it would solve mine. I wish I hadn't got into this.

KENDALL [*she stops playing*]. It's comforting to know that even a scientific genius is not immune. It rather justifies a weak woman—like me.

AUSTIN. It's rotten to be this way. Wondering about everything, suspecting everybody. Why should I care if Monica came back here or not? And yet—I do.

KENDALL [*slowly*]. I care too, Austin. Isn't it—stupid?

AUSTIN. Do you think Monica's in love with Storey?

KENDALL. You want me to tell you she isn't, don't you?

AUSTIN. Sometimes she tells me she loathes him. . . .

KENDALL. That's bad.

AUSTIN. Do you think so?

KENDALL. Wouldn't it be nice if people were like molecules or electrons or whatever you work with? It would be nice for you because you understand all about those things.

AUSTIN. Molecules are mysterious but they're more predictable than Monica. They obey some sort of law.

KENDALL [*amused and touched by his sincerity*]. I think you're charming, Austin.

AUSTIN. Don't say that. I know better.

KENDALL. But you are!

AUSTIN. I'm dull and thick-witted and I—I have no words.. I can't talk.

KENDALL. I think you do very well.

AUSTIN [*emboldened*]. Well, that's because it's you.

KENDALL. [*She is still at piano. She plays Tchaikowsky's "Wer Nun die Sehnsucht Kennt"*] I?

AUSTIN. I find it easy to talk to you. Why is it?

KENDALL. Perhaps it's because—we're sympathetic.

AUSTIN. I feel I know where I am with you. With Monica I never know.

KENDALL. But you don't want to be anywhere with me. With me—you don't have to make an effort. That's why you find me easy to be with.

AUSTIN. I—I'd like you to be my friend.

KENDALL. Gladly.

AUSTIN. Won't you tell me—what to do?

KENDALL. Aren't you assuming—I'm wiser than I really am?

AUSTIN. But you *are* wise. You know all about the world and—you know—you're sophisticated. [KENDALL is amused.] You've had all sorts of—experiences.

KENDALL. I'm more experienced than you, I fancy. But no amount of experience can keep you from falling in love with the wrong man, or the wrong woman. . . .

AUSTIN. I know that Storey isn't the right man for Monica. I know that he won't make her—happy.

KENDALL. I think he's sufficiently honest to have told her that himself.

AUSTIN. But he should *convince* her. What's the good of all his talk if he can't convince her?

KENDALL [*still amused*]. The more he talks the less convinced she probably is.

AUSTIN [*fingering scarf*]. I don't see why she should have returned here.

KENDALL [*shrugging her shoulders*]. Some trivial reason, most likely.

AUSTIN. She must have been here quite a time—if Storey wasn't dressed—when you came.

KENDALL. You know Storey. Never hurries. . . .

AUSTIN. It's funny. . . .

KENDALL. I've said—I think you can trust Storey.

AUSTIN [*bitterly*]. Can I?

KENDALL [*surprised at his tone*]. Why Austin . . . !

[Enter STOREY, dressed. KENDALL moves to the piano.

AUSTIN remains fixed, makes no move toward STOREY.]

STOREY. Awfully sorry to keep you waiting. But, then, Monica isn't here yet, either.

KENDALL [*from the piano*]. Two hours to dress. There's a fop for you, Austin. [*She plays a sentimental song.*]

STOREY [*to AUSTIN*]. Fact is I tried to write a little after you and Monica left.

AUSTIN [*stiffly*]. Did you?

STOREY. A few lines. . . .

KENDALL [*continuing to play*]. You're getting industrious, Storey. What's the matter?

STOREY. I've decided to marry, settle down, cultivate the virtues.

AUSTIN. Marry?

STOREY. Don't you know I propose to Mrs. Frayne every day? And if I'm to support her in the style to which she's been accustomed, I've got to work much harder.

KENDALL [*leaving the piano*]. Don't you believe him, Austin. I looked at your manuscript before Austin came and there was only one sentence added to what I read this afternoon. [*She goes to the tabouret and picks up manuscript.*]

STOREY. But that one sentence was born of a travail—lasting two hours.

KENDALL [*picking up manuscript and reading*]. "She rose and left him . . ." Did it take you two hours to write that?

STOREY. I did brilliantly to write that in two hours. The exquisite simplicity of that sentence! The compactness of it! Think of the million things I might have written. Think of all the sentences in the world. And I picked that one. In two hours! The tremendous—celerity of the choice astonishes me now I think of it. How did I do it?

KENDALL [*to AUSTIN*]. Is he drunk?

STOREY. . . . No, but it's a good idea. [*He pours champagne.*] Kendall. . . . [*He hands her a glass.*] Austin . . .

AUSTIN. No, thanks.

STOREY. But you've got to. It's to celebrate your engagement to Monica.

AUSTIN. I don't feel like it.

STOREY. But I want us all to be gay to-night. I can't get comfortably drunk with a sober man in the party.

KENDALL. Don't make him drink if he doesn't want to, Storey.

STOREY. Austin, have you ever been drunk in your life?

AUSTIN. Not really drunk, no.

STOREY [*to KENDALL*]. Imagine that!

KENDALL. If you're gloomy when you begin, drink only intensifies your mood.

STOREY. Nonsense.

KENDALL. Well, so I've heard.

STOREY. Here, Austin. It's glorious stuff. Drink it and in ten minutes you'll feel imperial, omniscient. You'll know more about physics than Einstein—the Universe'll stretch out below you like a plaid.

AUSTIN. What's the use of a sensation like that?

STOREY. What's the use of love?

AUSTIN. Well, I'll drink it anyway. [*They lift their glasses.*]

KENDALL. Happy days. . . .

STOREY. Happy days. . . . [*They drink. Quoting:*] "The true, the blushful Hippocrene."

KENDALL. Nothing blushful about Roget. You're colour-blind, Storey.

STOREY. Just an excuse to quote Keats. "With beaded bubbles winking at the brim. . . ."

AUSTIN [*triumphantly*]. Let's have another!

STOREY. That's the spirit. . . . [*The door-bell rings.*]

KENDALL. Miss Grey.

STOREY. I'll let her in. Pour the drinks, Austin. . . . [*He goes out. AUSTIN looks uncomfortable. He pours the champagne. Watches the door. KENDALL watches him. MONICA comes in. She looks charming in a simple evening frock, a pictures of youthful loveliness. STOREY follows her.*] May I present Miss Grey. . . .?

MONICA [*a bit self-conscious*]. Hello, Mrs. Frayne.

STOREY. I believe you've met Mr. Lowe. . . .

MONICA. Hello, Austin.

STOREY. Austin's on the loose to-night, Monica. Just guzzling champagne. . . .

KENDALL. Where would you like to go, Miss Grey? I haven't made a reservation anywhere. I wanted to know which dance-place you preferred.

MONICA. I am crazy about the music at the Trocadero.

KENDALL. Storey, will you telephone?

MONICA. Although you can't dance there. It's too crowded.

KENDALL. They're all crowded.

STOREY. I've heard of a marvellous coloured place——

MONICA. Oh, where?

STOREY. In the heart of Harlem.

MONICA [*excited*]. Oh, let's go!

STOREY. I'm told you have to be a good shot. . . .

KENDALL. Is that the place where the man was killed?

STOREY. Yes.

MONICA. How exciting!

STOREY. Austin, you're marrying a savage.

AUSTIN. Am I?

MONICA. Are you jilting me, Austin?

KENDALL. If we're going anywhere—we'd better start.

AUSTIN [*a trifle desperately*]. One more drink. . . .

STOREY. Good! I always felt, Austin, if you ever got started. [*He pours.*]

MONICA. A little one for me.

STOREY. This is Roget '15.

MONICA. Is it? Well, then, a big one.

KENDALL. None for me, Storey.

STOREY. Oh, please—we'll drink a toast. [*He pours for himself.*] To our married life. . . .!

MONICA. But I haven't got one.

STOREY. But you will.

MONICA. Proposing to me, Storey?

STOREY. Don't flirt, Monica. Austin's jealous enough already. . . .

KENDALL. What a prosaic toast!

STOREY. Exactly. [*Lifting glass.*] To our married life—may it be like the good prose of the English masters, solid, clear, sometimes hovering close to poetry—but in the main sensible and intelligent and—well-behaved. [*They drink.*]

KENDALL. Nice toast, Storey.

MONICA. I don't think it's nice at all. I certainly don't want that sort of marriage.

STOREY. Let's drink to your sort.

MONICA. I'd like my marriage to be always like fine

poetry—thrilling and exciting—and occasionally sensible and well-behaved—like prose.

STOREY. A large order, Austin!

AUSTIN [*bitterly*]. I suppose you mean that only you could fill it.

MONICA [*amazed*]. Why, Austin. . . .!

[*There is an embarrassed pause.*]

KENDALL. We'd better be starting.

STOREY. No, wait a minute. [*To AUSTIN:*] Are you angry with me?

KENDALL. It's the wine. . . .

AUSTIN [*sullenly*]. No, it's not the wine.

STOREY. What is it then? Come on—out with it. In *vino veritas*!

MONICA. What does that mean?

STOREY. It means that when you're tight you tell your right name.

MONICA. Oh, that's exciting! Everybody tell the truth—the absolute truth.

STOREY. We're not drunk enough for that.

AUSTIN [*to Monica*]. You might begin by telling me why you lied to me to-night.

KENDALL. Now, you see, Storey. . . .!

STOREY. You *have* had too much, Austin.

AUSTIN [*defiant*]. I'll have as much as I like. [*He pours himself another glassful and gulps it. He still addresses MONICA:*] You told me you were going downtown. You came back here.

MONICA. Yes, I did!

AUSTIN. I found your scarf.

STOREY [*pouring himself a drink*]. What if she did?

AUSTIN. I suspected something. When she told me to go out alone—I came back and saw her go in. I hung around in the street—

KENDALL. Do let's get started.

STOREY [*drinking*]. Let's talk it out. You hung around in the street. You, Austin!

AUSTIN. Yes, I did. It was all I could do to keep from

bursting in on you and—shouting. I hated you, Storey. I hate you now.

STOREY. Why?

AUSTIN. I resent you. I resent your fluency, your gift of words, your superficial . . . I resent you.

STOREY [*pours*]. Have another.

KENDALL. Please, Storey . . . !

STOREY. Why not? All of us. It's a rare moment. I feel we'll talk. We'll really talk—all of us. This sort of thing doesn't happen. It'll be—revealing. [*Lifting his glass.*] I swear to tell the truth—and nothing but the truth—so help me—Horace!

[*They all stand, glass in hand.*]

KENDALL. Something tells me we'll all be sorry for this. You, Storey, more than the rest.

STOREY [*recklessly*]. I'll risk it. [*Lifting his glass.*] To the Truth. [*He drinks and AUSTIN, MONICA, and KENDALL just sip their wine.*] Think of it—here is Austin Lowe—standing in the street, eating his heart out, hating me. Why? Because Monica ran upstairs to prattle some nonsense that seemed to her important. The most promising young scientist in America—reduced to the level of an Apache. Did you hate me bitterly, Austin?

AUSTIN. I wanted you to die.

STOREY. What did you think was happening in here?

KENDALL. This is silly.

STOREY [*to AUSTIN*]. I'll reward your frankness. I'll be frank too.

AUSTIN. I pictured her coming in here—going to you—I pictured her looking up to you with love in her eyes—love that should have been meant for me. I pictured—I wanted you to die!

STOREY. Sex reduces everybody to a common denominator. Here's Austin . . . always telling me that all creation is the result of an accident. . . .

AUSTIN. What's that got to do with it?

STOREY. You told me once that a slight change in the temperature a few thousand years ago would have put us all

at the mercy of the ants. . . . You're more conscious than any of us of the insignificance of man, of the feebleness of his cry amid the vast solitudes of time and space. Your knowledge makes you one man in ten million. And yet you stand in the streets looking up at that window and wanting to kill me because I'm kissing a girl! Savage, Austin!

AUSTIN. I suppose you're so damn civilized.

STOREY. I? Not at all. When I came into this room before and you told me Monica was going to marry you I felt a pang of resentment too.

MONICA [*delighted*]. It was true, then!

STOREY. Oh, it didn't spring from love for you. I felt: Why does *he* deserve her? I felt an impulse to take her away from you.

KENDALL. This is interesting, Storey.

STOREY [*to her*]. It's not that I'm in love with Monica.

MONICA [*sipping her wine*]. Fib!

STOREY [*ignoring her*]. It's that I resent Austin. I'm jealous of him. I envy him his scientific eminence, I envy him his money. . . .

KENDALL. You might envy his sincerity, his character.

STOREY. I wouldn't have his character for worlds. It would destroy my amusements. [*Interested in his own reaction.*] I said to myself: "Why should this mole-like creature"—meaning Austin—"possess this radiant girl?"

AUSTIN. I know that's what you think—I'm a mole, a scientific mole.

STOREY. Did I say that?

KENDALL. You're a third-rate writer and Austin is a first-rate scientist.

MONICA. Storey's not third-rate.

STOREY. My dear child, it's true. Artistically I'm third-rate. My mind is not as superficial as my work. . . .

KENDALL. Or as your life.

STOREY. I can't take myself seriously—that's my tragedy.

MONICA. Well, I don't care *what* you are. . . . I love you, Storey!

STOREY. Really, Monica, you'll embarrass me.

KENDALL. We mustn't give Miss Grey more champagne.

AUSTIN. I don't think I'll have a very good time at this party. I'm going home.

STOREY. You won't. I won't let you.

AUSTIN [*like a child who feels he's not wanted by anybody*]. I don't see why I should stay.

KENDALL. Nor I. It appears we ought to leave Monica and Storey alone.

STOREY. That would be a calamity.

KENDALL [*feline*]. For Miss Grey?

STOREY. For both of us. It would tie us to each other for ever.

MONICA. I don't see where the calamity comes in. . . .

STOREY. You're too young to see. You're too much in love to see. But I see—for both of us.

KENDALL. If Austin and I had any sense we'd leave you together.

MONICA. Why don't you?

KENDALL. Why don't I?

MONICA [*challenging*]. Why don't you?

KENDALL [*slowly*]. Because——

MONICA. Because?

KENDALL. I'm afraid I should have a sleepless night.

STOREY. If I were a cad I should have an affair with Monica. But regrettably I am a Puritan. Can't help it. It's in my blood.

MONICA. Liar!

STOREY. You are right, Monica. It is not Puritanism. It's prudence. I'd have to marry you. That would be fatal.

MONICA. Why?

STOREY. You would be happy for a year and unhappy the rest of your life. If you marry Austin you'll be unhappy for a year and happy the rest of your life.

KENDALL. And if I marry you?

STOREY [*pouring champagne for her*]. Your life will have the excitement of a perilous risk.

KENDALL. But I don't want excitement. I want—tranquillity, I want to be secure.

STOREY. Then you should marry Austin. Matrimonially he is a gilt-edged bond. I am a highly speculative stock.

KENDALL. What do you say, Austin?

AUSTIN [*who is befuddled now*]. What do I say to what?

KENDALL. Shall we be sensible? Shall we get married—you and I?

MONICA. Say yes, Austin.

AUSTIN. But I'm not in love with her. I'm in love with you.

KENDALL [*to STOREY*]. I'm out of luck, Storey.

STOREY. Don't weep over him. I'll take you on.

KENDALL. You're the only resource left me. I accept you—not because you're worthy—but because I can't help it.

STOREY. You hear, everybody—she accepts me.

KENDALL. I'll take a—flyer in you.

STOREY [*touching his glass to hers*]. And I'll try not to fluctuate too much. [*After he drinks.*] Now then, Austin. Your way is clear.

KENDALL. And now I really think we've talked enough nonsense. We'd better start.

STOREY. I'm just in the mood for a good jazz band.

KENDALL. Who'll carry the champagne?

STOREY. Austin.

AUSTIN [*in better spirits*]. I'll take it. [*He lifts hamper.*] Monica, I don't dance. Will you teach me?

MONICA [*tensely*]. Before we go—there's something I want to say.

STOREY. You'll tell us in the taxi.

MONICA. No. Here.

KENDALL. Another revelation?

MONICA. Yes. [*Her voice and manner are very strained, like one keyed up to accomplish an impossible feat.*]

STOREY. What's the matter, Monica? Aren't you well?

KENDALL. You would start this.

AUSTIN [*very concerned*]. Monica . . .!

MONICA. Since everybody's telling the truth—why shouldn't I?

STOREY. Don't say anything you'll be sorry for.

MONICA. Even if I *am* sorry—I'm going to say it.

KENDALL. I really think we ought to go out.

AUSTIN. The fresh air'll do her good.

MONICA. I'll say it if it—kills me.

AUSTIN [*anxious*]. What is it, Monica.

STOREY [*suspicious*]. Watch your step, child.

MONICA. I think you ought to know it, Mrs. Frayne.
Austin, I think you ought to know it.

AUSTIN. I know more than I want to now. [*Picking up her wraps.*] There's been too much confession. Let's start.

MONICA. No, stop. All of you. I want you to know—that Storey—Storey is the father of my child—my unborn child.

STOREY [*amazed*]. Monica!

MONICA. There now, I've said it. I feel better. [*She takes a quick gulp of champagne.* KENDALL and AUSTIN stare accusingly at STOREY. *They are speechless.*]

STOREY. She's ill. She's had too much champagne.

MONICA. I haven't. I've had less than any of you.

STOREY. Monica—you're—— [*Turning to the others.*]
Surely, you don't believe——

MONICA. If I had the courage to tell it. . . . [*She turns away. She cannot finish. The strain has really made her faint.*]

KENDALL. I did think, Storey, that you observed some code.

STOREY. But I tell you, the child is—she's irresponsible. She's doing this——

AUSTIN [*almost screaming*]. You cad! You damn, dirty cad!

KENDALL. We'd better go. Austin, will you take me home.

STOREY. She doesn't know what she's saying, I tell you.

MONICA. I do, too.

STOREY. Kendall, for pity's sake, listen.

KENDALL. I never want to see you again. Are you coming, Austin? [*She is at the door.*]

AUSTIN [*broken*]. Monica, is it—true?

MONICA. Yes, Austin. [KENDALL goes out.]

AUSTIN. True. . . .

STOREY. Austin, I swear to you it's not true. She's crazy.

AUSTIN [*laughing a bit wildly*]. Well—of course. Why not? [*He picks up MONICA's scarf lying on the chair, drops it and goes out. Between STOREY and MONICA there is a long silence. He simply stares at her.*]

MONICA [*at last*]. Gee, what've I done? [STOREY still stares at her.] I had no idea they'd raise such a fuss. . . . But once I got started I couldn't back out, could I? [*As he does not speak.*] You're angry? After all it was harder for me than it was for you. [*He still says nothing.*] Please say something, Storey. If you don't—I'll cry.

STOREY. You think you're smart, don't you?

MONICA. I think I'm brave. Storey, it's for you I did it too.

STOREY. Oh, for me.

MONICA. Storey—don't you want me?

STOREY. No.

MONICA. To-night—when I came back here—you made me feel you did. I was sure you did.

STOREY. That will pass and what will be left?

MONICA. Isn't there more to it than that, Storey?

STOREY. No.

MONICA. I won't let you go, Storey. I'm going to fight for you—I'm going to bring you back—to what you were—to that youth you've let go. . . . It's your one chance now, Storey—your last desperate chance—don't you see, Storey?

STOREY. But I don't want to go back. I can't go back.

MONICA. It's such a little distance, Storey.

STOREY. Is it?

MONICA. These things you're selling yourself for—what good are they? Is *this* [*she includes the room in a gesture*] what you *really* want? I can't believe it. Storey, dearest, I can see such a fine way we might live. . . .

STOREY. I tell you it wouldn't work, Monica—even if I did try to be what you think I could be—it would be no use.

MONICA. I can't think of arguments the way you can—I can't put things the way you can—I just know that if you had any bravery—if you had any courage . . . all the things

you say are lies you've made up—lies to justify yourself, to prop you up—you're a pampered, weak thing dawdling away your life on a sofa when you might be standing up straight on your own feet. . . .

STOREY. Perhaps. Only I can see us now—five years from now—in a cheap flat—you looking blowsy—with little wrinkles under your eyes—and I in cheap shirts and cracked shoes—brooding in a room over a corpse of my genius. . . . [*He gets up and goes to the piano and fills her glass.*] Well, I'll marry you—but the joke's on you. . . . You can't have life on your own terms, Monica. I can't. Nobody can.

MONICA. Compromise. . . . I suppose I'll come to that, too.

STOREY [*he drinks and goes to her*]. What's the use of thinking? Let's finish the champagne. Oh, you are lovely—kiss me.

MONICA. No, Storey.

STOREY. Now that you have lost your illusions you can begin to live.

[*She looks at him—falters to the chair. A little laugh breaks from her. . . . She sinks into the chair weeping piteously.*

STOREY watches her—he gulps another drink—but her misery touches him. Compassionate he runs to her—kneels beside her, strokes her hair.]

STOREY [*desperate—to stanch her grief*]. Monica, darling, don't. I'll try. I'll try. Maybe I can do it. Maybe with you—I can do it—dear Monica. Dear child. I'll try. I'll try. I'll try.

ACT III

SCENE.—*The same.*

TIME.—*The next morning.*

[STOREY is discovered, immured within his writing board, trying to work. Puts down a sentence. Regards it. Isn't pleased. Gets up. Lights a cigarette. Takes a turn about the room, returns, picks up his Ms. and, with an impulse of disgust crumples it in his hand and throws it into the empty fireplace. Picks up the magazine KENDALL had

been reading in the first act, looks at that and flings the magazine, too into the fireplace.]

STOREY [*savagely*]. Trash . . . trash . . . trash . . . ! [*Catches sight of himself in the mirror above the fireplace, regards himself in it.*] Trash . . . ! [*Nevertheless he straightens his tie, and settles his dressing-gown, an instinct of foppishness not to be denied. The door-bell rings.*] Damn! . . . [*It rings again . . . Shouting:*] I'm not at home . . . [*He starts across the room to see who it is. AUSTIN appears in the doorway.*]

AUSTIN. Hall door was open.

STOREY [*really glad to see him*]. Hello! I say—you look done in. What's the matter? [*AUSTIN does, in fact, look terrible. He has evidently been walking in the rain, his clothes are bedraggled. He hasn't slept. The champagne has made him ill all night. He is unshaved. His hands tremble. He is feverish and on the verge of being really ill.*] What's the matter? Here—sit down. [*AUSTIN shakes his head as STOREY proffers a chair.*] You've been out in the rain.

AUSTIN. Yes.

STOREY. What doing?

AUSTIN. Walking.

STOREY. But, my dear fellow. You shouldn't be doing that. You're obviously ill.

AUSTIN [*deadly serious*]. This isn't a friendly visit.

STOREY. No?

AUSTIN. I've come to kill you.

STOREY. My dear Austin. You *are* ill!

AUSTIN. That's why I've come.

STOREY. I tell you there isn't a reason on earth why you should hate me.

AUSTIN. No reason!

STOREY. Last night was as illusory as a nightmare.

AUSTIN. Don't deny anything. It only makes you more—hateful.

STOREY. To-day Monica will probably tell you herself—it was a lie.

AUSTIN. Nothing can save you, Storey.

STOREY. My dear chap, let me get you a cup of tea. . . .

AUSTIN [*flaring*]. Don't you laugh at me! [*He whips out a gun and points it at him.*]

STOREY. Is it loaded? Am I facing death? The situation is novel but not as thrilling as I might have expected. Do you really mean to kill me, Austin?

AUSTIN. Why do you think I bought it?

STOREY. Did you buy that thing? You needn't have. I have one upstairs. I'd have lent it you.

AUSTIN. You don't believe I'll do it. That's why you're so gay. . . .

STOREY. Ah, I suppose you will. I suppose—at the Threshold of the Great Unknown as they call it—I should be solemn. . . .

AUSTIN. Epigrams!

STOREY. Force of habit, sorry. You press that thing—and no more epigrams. Death is probably very commonplace. Disintegration. Resolution into original elements. Your province, Austin.

AUSTIN. Talker!

STOREY. Can't help it, old dear. It will wag.

AUSTIN. Not a real emotion, not a real feeling—even in the face of death.

STOREY. Real emotions and real feelings are destructive. I've learned to do without them. That's civilization.

AUSTIN. The old boast. . . .!

STOREY. It's true. *You're* in the grip of a real emotion, a real feeling. What's it doin' to you? Never mind what it wants to do to me. Listen a second. If you could empty your heart of its burden as easily as you can empty that cylinder, there'd be some sense in curving your little finger. But after I am lying there, silent for once, will you be happier? The world will be emptier, for I shall no longer be there—for you to hate.

AUSTIN. The world will be better off without you.

STOREY. Please be honest. Don't pretend this is a crusade. You want to shoot me because you think Monica's belonged to me. You want to shoot me because you're eaten by jeal-

ousy. You're not doing it to raise the general level of morality. Don't be a hypocrite, Austin. [*He lights a cigarette.*]

AUSTIN. No matter what the reason—I can't endure your living. . . .

STOREY. That I can understand. [*There is a pause. AUSTIN backs off from him as if to take better aim.*] Er—have you made any plans for the future?

AUSTIN. What is it to you?

STOREY [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Curious. . . .

AUSTIN. First you—then myself.

STOREY. Oh, both of us? Teutonic efficiency. You *are* German, aren't you, Austin? Lowe. Löwe. [*He pronounces it with the umlaut.*]

AUSTIN [*in a knot of anger*]. Be quiet. . . .

STOREY. It's rather a pity. Loss to the community. You, I mean. First-rate men are too rare to be permitted the luxury of suicide. I sha'n't matter. But *you*. It's a shame, really.

AUSTIN. Don't worry about me.

STOREY. But I do. Think of it. You've—let's say thirty years left to make your discoveries in. Science is an endless chain, isn't it? I suppose, really, there is only one science as there is only one art. You might discover a little trifling thing that'll help some other fellow discover another trifling thing and that might lead to—well, anything, mightn't it? [*AUSTIN backs off a little farther. Pursuing his vein.*] Something perfectly tremendous—a cure for cancer or an escalator to Mars or anything, mightn't it? [*AUSTIN backs off more.*] Austin, do you mind not moving away from me? I admit—it makes me nervous.

AUSTIN. Have you nothing else to say?

STOREY. Do you want a last speech? Dear me! I can't think of a thing. Isn't it funny? Now that I'd like to say something brilliant I can't. I've often wondered how all those great men in history pulled their death-bed speeches. Made 'em up in advance, I bet.

AUSTIN. All right then. . . . [*He levels his gun.*]

STOREY. Wait! I've thought of something. . . .

AUSTIN. Say it quick. . . .

STOREY. His last words were: "Give my love to Monica. . . ."

AUSTIN [*wildly*]. Damn you. . . .! [*He fires. STOREY has dropped to the ground, the bullet goes three feet over his head. AUSTIN thinks he has killed him; he staggers, almost fainting, into a chair.*]

STOREY. God! Austin. You nearly frightened the life out of me. God! [*He pours a drink of Scotch and gulps it. Pours another for AUSTIN.*] Here. [*AUSTIN shakes his head.*] Do you good.

AUSTIN. Let me alone.

STOREY [*drinking it himself*]. I saved your life, Austin, as well as my own. I give you back to Science. If you'd hit me they'd have sent you to jail for life. A valuable man like you. The jury system is one of the prime stupidities of democracy, don't you think? [*AUSTIN rises to his feet. He is pitiful.*] Where you going?

AUSTIN. Home.

STOREY. You're in no condition to go home. . . . You're ill, trembling.

AUSTIN. Sorry. Made a fool of myself.

STOREY [*supporting him*]. What did you do when you left here last night?

AUSTIN. Last night?

STOREY. Yes.

AUSTIN. Went home. Ill. Not used to drinking. That champagne.

STOREY. Eaten anything to-day? [*AUSTIN shakes his head.*] And you've been walking in all that rain? Look here—you've got to drink this. [*He forces some whiskey between his lips.*]

AUSTIN. Guess I'll go on.

STOREY. Wait till it stops raining.

AUSTIN. Sorry to have. . . . [*He sways.*]

STOREY. Sha'n't let you go out in this condition.

AUSTIN. Feel wobbly.

STOREY. Tell you what—you'll go in my room and lie down.

AUSTIN. Too much trouble.

STOREY. You've got to. A little nap'll make you as right as—unfortunate simile for a day like this. This way. . . . [*He partly supports him and leads him up the stairs. The door-bell rings.*] Must be Kendall. [*Shouts through door.*] Come in. . . .

AUSTIN. I'll just lie down a minute. . . .

STOREY. A good sleep and a hot bath. . . . [*They exit upstairs. KENDALL comes in. She looks around the room. STOREY sticks his head in at bedroom door.*] Be with you in a minute, Kendall. Austin. . . . [*His sign mystifies KENDALL, except that she gathers that AUSTIN is inside. STOREY disappears into the bedroom. KENDALL catches sight of the pistol which STOREY has picked up and put on the table. She sniffs the powder. Goes to fireplace, picks up STOREY's crumpled manuscript. Lets it fall again. She is full of thoughts. STOREY returns, and, after a moment:*] He came to kill me and remained—to take a nap.

KENDALL. Poor fellow.

STOREY. Poor fellow! I like that. What about *me*?

KENDALL. You deserve it, Storey.

STOREY. What for?

KENDALL. We don't need to discuss it.

STOREY. You mean—last night. It's too silly. Even if it were true. . . .

KENDALL. Don't deny it, Storey. Spare me that!

STOREY. Even if it *were* true—about Monica and me—one doesn't deserve death for that sort of thing.

KENDALL. I'm afraid I'm a very conventional person, Storey. By your standards at any rate.

STOREY. I leave standards to the moralists. I do the best I can. That's what everybody does—in the long run.

KENDALL. I didn't come here to reproach you, Storey.

STOREY. It's a mess, I know. It all comes—from trying to be intelligent.

KENDALL [*after a moment*]. I came to say good-bye. . . .

STOREY. Good-bye?

KENDALL. I'm going abroad.

STOREY. When?

KENDALL. Probably on the Olympic. Sailing on the 10th. That will give me time to get my passports.

STOREY. You hate me, don't you?

KENDALL. I don't think so. I feel—dead about you. Just now. . . .

STOREY. I tell you solemnly—that what Monica said last night—isn't true.

KENDALL. Don't stoop to that, Storey. [*She crosses him to fireplace. There is a pause. STOREY gives it up.*] I see you've been throwing away your manuscripts.

STOREY. Yes.

KENDALL. A good sign. I believe you might do good work—if you'd settle down.

STOREY [*ironically*]. Monica's idea.

KENDALL. She must love you very much—to confess before everybody—the way she did last night.

STOREY [*wearily*]. You don't know the half of it.

KENDALL. It's Monica—Miss Grey—I came to speak to you about—really.

STOREY. Yes?

KENDALL. At first I suppose it'll be a little hard for you—economically. Especially if you mean to do serious work. . . . I thought perhaps. . . .

STOREY. You want to give us money—to start the new life on?

KENDALL. I have so much—and I'm alone.

STOREY. It's an excellent idea. But I'm afraid Monica—wouldn't see it.

KENDALL. She needn't know.

STOREY [*ironically*]. Would you have us start the new life—with a lie?

KENDALL. Always laughing. . . .

STOREY. Why not? Life is amusing.

KENDALL. You ought to turn over a new leaf, really, Storey.

STOREY [*pointing to fireplace*]. Look at that manuscript.

KENDALL. That is a good sign.

STOREY. Nonsense. An impulse of irritation. The day after I marry I shall be regretting I tore it up. I shall be writing it again—from memory. I shall have to redouble my output because I shall have Monica to support and—you will be in Europe. In time Monica will come to see that I haven't in me the great works which she suspects are secreted in my brain like bonds in a vault. She'll begin to despise me a little bit. And I'll begin—to deceive her a little bit. And there we'll be—a typical married couple.

KENDALL. Poor Monica!

STOREY. It's too bad for both of us, really. You and I might have lived a civilized life. You have the two great requirements for the wife of a poor but intelligent man: money and tolerance.

KENDALL. Unfortunately my tolerance doesn't extend—to this.

STOREY. This—as you call it—is a lie. It doesn't exist.

KENDALL. Good-bye, Storey.

STOREY. I tell you it simply isn't true.

KENDALL. Cheat!

STOREY. I should think Monica's—device—would be transparent to you.

KENDALL. Cad! Good-bye forever.

STOREY. In the end everything is reduced to cliché.

KENDALL. I never want to see you again. . . . [*She sweeps to the door.*]

AUSTIN [*off*]. Storey. Storey. . . .

STOREY. Coming. . . . Wait a second, will you, Kendall?

KENDALL. I'm going.

[*The door-bell rings.*]

STOREY [*on the stairs*]. See who that is. And don't go. Have a heart. [*He disappears. KENDALL is at the door when it opens. It is MONICA.*]

MONICA. Oh! I'm sorry. I rang.

KENDALL. I'm just leaving.

MONICA. Is Storey home?

KENDALL [*uncertain how much to tell her*]. He's—inside.

MONICA. I wanted to see him just for a minute. Please don't go.

KENDALL. I must. I only dropped in—to say good-bye to Storey.

MONICA. Good-bye?

KENDALL. I'm going abroad. I shall be gone a long time.

MONICA. Oh! But you needn't go. . . .

KENDALL. My dear child. . . .

MONICA. And you needn't call me a child. I'm old—now.

KENDALL. All of a sudden?

MONICA. Yes.

KENDALL. What's—aged you?

MONICA. Never mind. But I tell you—sincerely—you needn't go—on my account.

KENDALL. What inspires this mood—of renunciation?

MONICA. It's not renunciation. It's indifference.

KENDALL. I'm afraid—you're deceiving yourself.

MONICA. I'm not. Honestly. You'll see. I came—to tell that—to Storey.

KENDALL. I came once—to tell him that. I stayed, though.

MONICA. This is different.

KENDALL. Oh, you're angry with him. That will pass.

MONICA. But I'm *not* angry with him. This is something else I tell you—something else altogether.

KENDALL. I think you'll be as happy as most people. Good-luck. . . . [*She reaches out her hand to MONICA.*]

MONICA [*taking it*]. You're very much in love with him, aren't you?

KENDALL. I'm used to it. It's only uncomfortable—when I see him. But I'm going away now. I enjoy travelling and altogether I have a pretty good time.

MONICA. But I tell you if it's on account of me—you needn't go.

KENDALL. You're worse off than I am, really. You're in love with a man who doesn't exist. I'm in love with one who does. That's why this sort of thing is less of a shock. . . . If it ever happens to you. . . .

MONICA. Mrs. Frayne, I must tell you—what I said last night—wasn't true.

KENDALL. Thanks. But one doesn't invent that sort of lie. . . .

MONICA. But I swear to you I—

[Enter STOREY.]

STOREY. Hello, Monica.

MONICA. Hello, Storey.

KENDALL. Good-bye.

STOREY. Oh, don't go. . . .

KENDALL. I really must. . . . [To MONICA:] Good-luck.
[She grips her hand, smiles at her and goes.]

MONICA. She's—awfully nice.

STOREY. Oh, Kendall's one of the best. Understands everything.

MONICA. It hasn't done her much good, has it?

STOREY. How do you mean?

MONICA. She's not very happy.

STOREY. When it comes to that—who is?

MONICA. You manage to have a pleasant time.

STOREY. I manage to behave as if I were having a pleasant time. One owes that to one's friends, I believe—just as one owes it them to be decently shaved and to wear clean linen.

MONICA. That's bunk. You have a good time because you're built that way. You're too selfish to worry about anything.

STOREY. I've reformed. I'm a better man, now, Monica.

MONICA. Are you?

STOREY. Yes.

MONICA. How can you tell?

STOREY. Well, for one thing, I've thrown away the story I was working on. It's in the grate.

MONICA. What made you do that?

STOREY. Last night after you left I had several hours of heroic introspection. Henceforth I shall devote myself to the sincerities, the eternal verities, that sort of thing.

MONICA. I wonder. . . .

STOREY. The trouble is the masses bore me, democracy

bores me. I'd like to be Henry James and live with you in England on a private income.

MONICA. Poor Storey! I've robbed you of your subsidy.

STOREY. What do you mean?

MONICA. Mrs. Frayne. I just told her the truth about—last night.

STOREY. Did you?

MONICA. She said: "One doesn't invent that sort of lie."

STOREY. Well, it doesn't matter.

MONICA [*sarcastic*]. How generous you are!

STOREY. I dare say it'll be the finest possible thing for me to buckle down to hard work. I'll do hack-work to make a living and the rest of the time——

MONICA. The rest of the time?

STOREY. The rest of the time I'll write sombre masterpieces, blood and tears—I'll anatomize suffering. . . .

MONICA. But, Storey, you don't know anything about suffering.

STOREY. Most suffering *is* the bunk, you know, Monica. Unintelligent people who want things beyond their limitations.

MONICA [*stamping her foot*]. How *can* you be so complacent?

STOREY. You're a victim of the popular prejudice in favour of agony. Why is a book about unhappy, dirty people better than one about gay and comfortable ones?

MONICA. But life *isn't* gay—or comfortable.

STOREY [*seriously*]. Dear darling, life is sad. I know it's sad. But I think it's gallant—to pretend that it isn't.

MONICA. Poor Austin. . . .

STOREY. What makes you think of him?

MONICA. I've been thinking a lot of him—since last night. I'll never forget his face—the way he looked. And *you* think life is gay—and comfortable!

[*There is a pause.*]

STOREY [*sincerely*]. Monica. . . .

MONICA [*out of a brown study*]. Yes.

STOREY. If you take me on—I'll do my best.

[*She stares at him with curiosity, fixedly.*]

MONICA. Will you?

STOREY. I'll try to be—what you think me.

MONICA. Thank you, Storey.

STOREY. Don't you believe me?

MONICA [*abstractedly*]. What?

STOREY. Don't you believe me? That I'll try. What's the matter? Why are you staring at me?

MONICA. I'm trying to discover what it is.

STOREY. What *what* is? Why is everyone so cryptic to-day?

MONICA. I'm trying to discover what it is—that's changed everything. You *look* the same as you did yesterday.

STOREY. The same face. . . .

MONICA. But I can't remember the time when I loved you. Is it only yesterday—that I loved you?

STOREY. This morning—one A. M.

MONICA. Can't recall what it was like.

STOREY. What's this? Don't tell me you're fickle, too.

MONICA. It's not—fickle. It's that—you seem to be another person. Your voice is different.

STOREY. Slight-cold.

MONICA. The things you say—sound hollow to me. I don't love you to-day, Storey.

STOREY. One can't have everything.

MONICA. I'll never be in love with you again, Storey. I'm sure. It's over. It's dead.

STOREY. How do you know? Tell me. I'm interested.

MONICA. I just—know it.

STOREY. The things I said to you last night?

MONICA. I suppose so. I feel—old now, Storey, I see myself—all this time I've loved you—like a person looking from outside, a very old person. I see a little girl, a rather stupid little girl, reading a fairy-tale and believing it true—long after the other children knew it to be a lie.

STOREY. I always told you your idea of me was an idealization.

MONICA. But I never believed it—till last night. Last

night I saw you as you really are—mercenary and unadventurous and—practical. I saw your soul.

STOREY. *Must* we drag the soul into it?

MONICA. I saw it—a rather fat thing lying in an arm-chair—with a brain ticking, inside, like a clock. . . .

STOREY. But I'm not fat, Monica.

MONICA. Your body isn't and your brain isn't but your soul *is*, Storey. You know it is.

STOREY. Why *will* women talk about the soul?

MONICA. All night I saw you like that. I said to myself: "When you see him, when he stands in front of you—you'll forget all that, you'll feel as you did before." But I do see you. You do stand in front of me. And it doesn't matter.

STOREY. Don't talk like that. I'll fall in love with you.

MONICA. You're too clever for me, Storey. Your emotions are too complicated.

STOREY. I wish I were like Austin. *His* emotions are as simple as those——

MONICA [*tenderly*]. As simple as those of a child.

STOREY [*rather bitterly*]. No second man peering over *his* shoulder.

MONICA. He's a darling.

STOREY [*abruptly*]. The darling almost shot me this morning.

MONICA. Shot you!

[STOREY *points to the revolver lying on the table. She looks at it, horrified.*]

STOREY. He came here in a simple, uncomplicated mood. He's a rotten shot.

MONICA. Where'd he go?

STOREY. He's upstairs, taking a nap.

MONICA. How is he?

STOREY. Feverish. He'd been up all night, walking in the rain.

MONICA. We ought to have a doctor.

STOREY. I don't think so. Champagne and jealousy.

MONICA. What did he say?

STOREY. He was incoherent. Had an idea he ought to

avenge your honour, I suppose. Acted like a moving-picture hero and talked like a commuter. Really, he was ridiculous.

MONICA. Didn't you tell him—that what I said last night——?

STOREY. Of course I told him. But he wouldn't believe me. Nobody'll ever believe the truth now. Really, Monica. . . .

MONICA [*thinking only of AUSTIN*]. Think what he must have gone through—to want to do that.

STOREY. Can you imagine the trial if he'd succeeded! [*Tracing imaginary headline:*] "Scientist Kills Writer Over Woman. Following an all-night champagne party in Clark Storey's luxurious West Side apartment. . . ." The note of licentiousness—and you on the witness stand—the story of your confession—everybody'd say I got my deserts and Austin would come out a vindicated Saint George. . . .

MONICA. Don't, Storey.

STOREY. But it's so *pretty*, Monica. It's almost a shame he didn't hit me. Can't you see the humour of it, the lovely irony of it? What would you say on the witness stand? Would you tell them the truth? That I never ruined you at all, that you lied, to save me from myself, as you call it, to prevent me from making a mercenary marriage. But if you did that, you'd deprive the defense of a case. You'd send Austin to the chair. . . .

MONICA. You're dreadful, Storey.

STOREY. And even if you said it was true—there must be difficulties. The prosecution would try to undermine you. They'd want proof beyond your statement. I believe you said you were the mother of my child. Well, they'd want the child, Monica; you'd have to produce a child. . . .

[*MONICA snatches up her wrap to go. She is outraged by his facetiousness. AUSTIN appears on the landing.*]

AUSTIN [*a bit wildly*]. Monica! [*He comes downstairs.*]

STOREY. I thought you were asleep.

MONICA. He is ill!

AUSTIN. I'm going now.

MONICA. Why he's trembling, feverish. . . .

STOREY. Wait. I'll get him something hot to drink. [*He goes out.*]

AUSTIN. Did Storey tell you why I—what I—

MONICA. Yes. He told me.

AUSTIN. Think if I had killed him—the man you love—I'll never forgive myself, Monica.

MONICA. Whatever has happened is my fault.

AUSTIN. I've found out things about myself—what I really am. Look what I tried to do.

MONICA. Don't blame yourself. I can't bear it. It's I. . . .

AUSTIN. No. You must know everything. I must tell you everything. You've got to know. I made up my mind to kill him. And do you know why? It wasn't alone because I hated him—but because I wanted to hurt you. I hated you, Monica.

MONICA. I know.

AUSTIN. But all the time—it's hard for me to explain it—I loved you. You were inside of me. I was desperate—to tear you out. I see now I can't do it. I'll never do it. I have no existence apart from you.

MONICA. Wait—Austin—listen to me. You're trying to explain yourself to me. You needn't. I understand you. I understand you very well. You are clear to me. My trouble is—how will I make myself clear to you? How can I make you understand what happened last night? How I could have said what I did? Because it isn't true, Austin.

AUSTIN [*repeating mechanically*]. Isn't true. . . .

MONICA. It seemed to me—I thought—that by saying it—I could change everything—make everything over—all in a second. It was so childish. I thought. . . .

AUSTIN. You needn't tell me, Monica.

MONICA. How can I make you understand—that all that's over now—that last night—yesterday—I loved Storey? That to-day I don't?

AUSTIN. [*simply*]. You don't owe me—explanations, Monica.

MONICA. No, but I must. I want you to know everything that's in my thoughts. I mustn't hold anything back from

you. I feel pain still about Storey, even now. But it isn't for *him*, do you understand, Austin? It isn't for losing *him*! It's for the feeling I had for him—that it should have been wasted—that feeling that will never come again—that can't come again. . . .

AUSTIN. Mine—remains.

[*There is a pause.*]

MONICA. Are you sorry?

AUSTIN. No.

MONICA. Austin—if you want me—I'll love, honour, and obey you. And I'll try to make it up to you—for the bad time I've given you.

AUSTIN. You're here. You're close to me. It's like being alive—for the first time.

[*STOREY comes back; carries glass of punch.*]

STOREY. I had this finished five minutes ago. I drank it and made another. Here, Austin. . . .

AUSTIN. No, thank you, Storey.

MONICA. We're just leaving. . . .

STOREY. Oh! [*A pause.*] Bless you, my children!

AUSTIN [*embarrassed*]. Er—thanks. Coming, Monica?

MONICA. Yes. Good-bye, Storey.

[*AUSTIN goes out.*]

STOREY. I'm awfully glad, Monica. It's what I always told you to do, isn't it? [*She says nothing. They look at each other. She is affected and he is, too. To break the moment he reverts to flippancy.*] Life does occasionally imitate fiction. A happy ending, eh, Monica?

MONICA. I think so, Storey. Good-bye. [*She goes out.*]

STOREY [*after a moment*]. That's that. . . . [*He ponders; he is serious. He takes another drink. Walks across the room, sits down, entrenches himself behind the sewing board, is about to write, looks toward the fireplace, goes to it, picks up the torn script and looks at it ruefully.*] Damn fool. . . .! [*Goes back, begins writing, can't concentrate, gets up again, "snaps out of it" and goes to the telephone.*] Regent 2772 please—is Mrs. Frayne there—hello—Kendall?—Storey—I'm frightfully low, Kendall—you've got to come and cheer

me up—oh, now, are *you* going to drop me too?—she's gone—certainly, with Austin—we'll dance at their wedding, Kendall—what about dinner?—you're busy—what?—oh, packing—oh, don't go abroad—if you do let's go together—that is an idea—but why?—now please be reasonable—don't tell me you still believe that silly story of Monica's—God, Ken, I've never known you so stubborn—in common justice you ought to take me back on probation until Austin and Monica—that's the very least you can do—and, Kendall, I promise you—I absolutely promise you—that if their baby—if their baby bears the *slightest* resemblance to me—thank God, Kendall, you're laughing—what?—no, why should you?—keep your passport and I'll get another—of course—I can write as well in Europe as I can here—even better—no, I've got a better idea—you cancel your passage and we'll go the Southern route—oh yes, lovely this time of the year—land at Naples and motor to Nice—certainly—along the Riviera—beautiful trip. . . .

[*The descending curtain cuts short his itinerary.*]

THE FARCE OF THE WORTHY MASTER PIERRE PATELIN

(c. 1469)

Translated and Adapted by Moritz Jagendorf

COPYRIGHT, 1925, BY
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

This play is fully protected by the copyright law, all requirements of which have been complied with. No performance, either professional or amateur, may be given without the permission of the publisher, D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 35 West Thirty-Second Street, New York, or D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, 25 Bedford Street, Covent Garden, London.

Copyright, 1917, by the Poet Lore Co.

Originally presented by the Washington Square Players, at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, on March 20, 1916.

CHARACTERS

A SOLDIER	<i>Glenn Hunter</i>
ANOTHER SOLDIER	<i>W. A. Richardson, Jr.</i>
THE JUGGLER	<i>Spalding Hall</i>
A GIRL	<i>Florence Enright</i>
A BOY	<i>James Terbell</i>
PIERRE PATELIN, <i>a notary</i>	<i>Roland Young</i>
GUILLEMETTE, <i>his wife</i>	<i>Josephine A. Meyer</i>
A SISTER OF MERCY.....	<i>Jean Strange</i>
ANOTHER SISTER OF MERCY.....	<i>Suzette Stuart</i>
MASTER WILLIAM JOCEAULME, <i>a draper</i>	<i>Walter Frankl</i>
A MARKET WOMAN	<i>Mary Norris</i>
A SCAMP	<i>Edward J. Ballantine</i>
A LADY	<i>Helen Westley</i>
A MOTHER	<i>Lillian Hudson</i>
A BABY	<i>Holland Robin Hudson</i>
TIBALD LAMBKIN, <i>a shepherd</i>	<i>Ralph Roeder</i>
THE JUDGE'S CLERK.....	<i>Otto K. Liveright</i>
THE JUDGE	<i>C. Hooper Trask</i>
A SOLDIER	<i>Harold Meltzer</i>
ANOTHER SOLDIER	<i>S. A. Eliot, Jr.</i>

SCENE.—*A little town in France in the Year of Our Lord, 1400*

THE FARCE OF THE WORTHY MASTER PIERRE PATELIN

(DEDICATED TO CLAIRE AND STANLEY LA DOW.)

SCENE I.—*On either side of the stage is a street scene. In back, a curtain is partly drawn to each side showing the interior of PATELIN'S house.*

[PATELIN sits in bed reading a large folio; on a chair next to the bed GUILLEMETTE sits mending an old dress. On a bench a little to the side are kitchen utensils: a frying pan, a broom, etc. On the bed lies a nightgown and a cap.]

GUILLEMETTE. You have nothing to say now, I suppose, have you? . . . While I needs must mend rags a beggar would be ashamed to wear—and you, a member of the learned profession . . . a lawyer . . . !

PATELIN [*in bed*]. There was a time when my door was crowded with clients . . . when I had plenty of work . . . fine clothes to wear, too.

GUILLEMETTE. Of what good is that to-day—eh?

PATELIN. Wife, I was too shrewd for them. Men don't like people wiser than themselves.

GUILLEMETTE. Aye, you could always beat them at law . . . But that was long ago.

PATELIN. It hurts me truly to see you mending rags . . . and wives of men who are thick-skulled asses wearing golden-threaded cloth and fine wool. There is that draper's wife across the way. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Cease the cackling. [*Silently working for a while.*] I'd give something rare and costly for a new gown on St. Mary's day. Heaven knows I need it.

PATELIN. So you do and so do I as well. It is not fit to see one of the learned profession walking about like a beggar on the highway. Ah! If I could only get some clients! I know my law well enough yet. There is not many a one can beat me at the finer points.

GUILLEMETTE. A fig for it all. Of what good is it? We are all but starved . . . and as for clothes—look.

[*Holds up the dress she is mending.*]

PATELIN. Silence, good wife. Could I have some business and put my head with seriousness to it. . . . Who knows but the days of plenty would soon enough return!

GUILLEMETTE. There is not a soul in town but a fool would trust himself to you. They know too well your way of handling cases. They say you are a master . . . at cheating.

[*PATELIN rises, indignant.*]

PATELIN. They mean at law . . . at law, good wife. Ha, I should like to see a lawyer beat me at it . . . and . . . [*Suddenly stops, thinks for a moment, then his whole face lights up.*] I am going to market. I have just thought of a little business I have there.

[*Gets out of bed.*]

GUILLEMETTE. Going to market? What for? You have no money.

PATELIN. I am going to market . . . on business . . . to the long-nosed donkey, our neighbor . . . the Draper.

GUILLEMETTE. What for?

PATELIN. To buy some cloth. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Holy Saints! You know well he is more close-fisted than any other merchant in town. He'll never trust you.

PATELIN. Ah, that's just why I am going. The more miserly, the easier to gull; and . . . I have thought of something fine . . . that will get us enough cloth . . . both for you and me.

GUILLEMETTE. You must be mad.

PATELIN [*not heeding her*]. Let me see. . . . [*Measuring her with his arm's length.*] Two and one half for you. . . . [*Measuring himself in the same way.*] Three for me . . .

and . . . What color would you want it? Green or red?

GUILLEMETTE. I'll be pleased with any kind. Beggars can't be choosers. But don't think I believe what you say. I am not a fool. You'll never get any from Master Joceaulme. He'll never trust you, I am certain.

PATELIN. Who knows? Who knows? He might . . . and then really get paid . . . on Doom's-day. . . . Ho, ho. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Don't you think you had better make haste, lest all the cloth be sold?

PATELIN [*offended, walking off*]. Wife, I forgive you. You are only a woman. I'll teach you a fine lesson now. If I don't bring home a fine piece of cloth—dark green or blue, such as wives of great lords wear, then never believe another word I say.

GUILLEMETTE. But how will you do it? You haven't a copper in your pocket.

PATELIN. Ah! That's a secret. Just wait and see. So . . . [*to himself as he walks slowly away*] two and one-half for her and three for me. . . . Look well to the house while I am away, wife. [*Exit.*]

GUILLEMETTE. What fool of a merchant'll trust him! . . . unless he is blind and deaf!

The back curtains are closed and now only the street scene is visible.

SCENE II.

PATELIN comes from his door and walks across to THE DRAPER'S table. THE DRAPER is just coming out with a pack of cloth and wools which he throws on the table. He busies himself arranging his goods. PATELIN looks on for a while, then goes right up to him.]

PATELIN. Ho, there, worthy Master William Joceaulme, permit me the pleasure of shaking your hand. How do you feel?

THE DRAPER. Very fine, the Saints be thanked.

PATELIN. I am truly happy to hear that. And business?

THE DRAPER. You know how . . . one day one way, the

other, altogether different. You can never tell when ill luck may blow your way.

PATELIN. May the Saints keep it from your doors! It's the very phrase I often heard your father use. God rest his soul among the Martyrs! What a man he was! Wise! There was not an event in Church, State, or market he did not foretell. No other was more esteemed. And you—they say that you are more and more like him each day.

THE DRAPER. Do seat yourself, good Master Patelin.

PATELIN. Oh, I can well stand.

THE DRAPER. Oh, but you must.

[*Forcing him to sit on the bench.*]

PATELIN. Ah! I knew him well, your father. You resemble him as one drop of milk another. Lord, what a man he was! Wise! We, among the learned, called him the weather-cock. Well-nigh every piece of clothing I wore came from his shop.

THE DRAPER. He was an honest man, and people liked to buy from him.

PATELIN. A more honest soul there never was. And I have heard often said the apple has fallen nigh the tree.

THE DRAPER. Of a truth, good Master . . . ?

PATELIN. It's not flattery, either. [*Looking intently at him.*] Lord, but you do resemble him! No child was ever so like his father. Each marked like the other. This is just his nose, his ears, nay, the very dimple on his chin.

THE DRAPER. Yes, they do say I look much like him.

PATELIN. Like one drop of water another. . . . And kind-hearted! He was ever ready to trust and help, no matter who came along. The Lord knows he was ever the gainer by it. Even the worst scoundrels thought twice before cheating him.

THE DRAPER. A merchant must always take heed, good Master Patelin. You can never know whether a man is honest or not.

PATELIN. Aye, that's true. But he had a way of guessing whether it was an honest man he was dealing with that was a marvel to behold. Many a funny tale he told of it—when

we sat over a bottle of wine. [*Feeling the cloth on the table.*] What a fine piece of cloth! Did you make it from your own wool? Your father always used to weave his cloths from the wool of his own sheep.

THE DRAPER. So do I, Sir. From the wool of my own sheep.

PATELIN. You don't say so! This is business in a manner I like to see it done. The father all over again.

THE DRAPER [*seeing the possibility of a sale*]. Ah, worthy Master Patelin, it is a great hardship indeed, to which I put myself because of this. And the loss and cost! Here a shepherd kills your sheep, I have a case against one of those scoundrels right now. The weavers ask pay like goldsmiths. But to me this is all of little account. . . . I'd attend to the making of each piece myself were it to cost ten times as much as I get in return. . . . So long as I please those who buy.

PATELIN. I can see this. It would make a fine gown.

THE DRAPER. You could not get a finer piece even in the city of Paris.

PATELIN. I am sorry I am not out to do any buying just now, though I am tempted to.

THE DRAPER. Business bad? Money scarce?

PATELIN. No, indeed not. I have a nice little sum of gold crowns even now, but I am about to invest them in something profitable. . . . It's as strong as iron this cloth here. [*Examining it.*]

THE DRAPER. You may take my word for it, Master, there is not a finer or stronger in town. What's more, it can be bought cheap just now. It's a fine investment. Wool is certain to go up.

PATELIN. Aye, it's a fine piece of cloth, Master Joceaulme. . . . But then I shouldn't . . . yet . . .

THE DRAPER. Come, Master Patelin, come. You need the cloth and have the money to buy. Then you'll invest a few crowns less. A man should always have a gown tucked away in the coffer. What would you say if some fine day, comes along the town crier shouting: there has been a new judge appointed and it is Master Pa . . .

PATELIN. You must have your little joke, worthy Sir. Just like your father. I would pass his shop, a friendly chat . . . and then my purse was much the lighter for it. But I never regretted it, never.

THE DRAPER. You wouldn't now, either. It's well worth buying.

PATELIN. It tempts me. . . . It would look well on my good wife, and I could use it well for myself.

THE DRAPER. It needs but your saying. Come, what's the word, Master?

PATELIN. Well. . . .

THE DRAPER. It's yours even though you hadn't a copper.

PATELIN [*somewhat absent-minded*]. Oh, I know that.

THE DRAPER. What?

PATELIN. I'll take it.

THE DRAPER. That's talking. How much do you want?

PATELIN. How much is it per yard?

THE DRAPER. Which do you like best? The blue?

PATELIN. Yes, that is the one.

THE DRAPER. You want a rock bottom price, no haggling. This is the finest piece in my shop. For you I'll make it twenty-one sous per yard.

PATELIN. Holy Saints! Master! What do you take me for? A fool? It isn't the first time I am buying cloth.

THE DRAPER. It's the price it cost me myself; by all the Saints in Heaven.

PATELIN. That's too much—entirely too much.

THE DRAPER. Wool costs like holy oil now, and these shepherds are forever robbing me.

PATELIN. Well, there is truth in what you say. I'll take it at the price. I like to see every man make his honest penny. Measure it.

THE DRAPER. How much do you want?

PATELIN. Let me see. Two and a half for her, three for me, that makes five and a half.

THE DRAPER. Take hold there, Master, here they are. [*Measuring out.*] One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five. I'll make it six. You'll not mind the few coppers more.

PATELIN. Not when I get something fine in return. Then I need a cap, too.

THE DRAPER. Would you like me to measure it backwards?

PATELIN. Oh, no, I trust your honesty. How much is it?

THE DRAPER. Six yards at twenty-one sous the yard—that's exactly nine francs.

PATELIN. Nine francs . . . [*Under his breath.*] Here it goes. Nine francs.

THE DRAPER. Yes, and a good bargain you got.

PATELIN [*searching his pockets*]. No . . . I have but little with me, and I must buy some small things. You'll get your money to-morrow.

THE DRAPER. What!!! . . . No . . . No . . .

PATELIN. Well, good Master Joceaulme, you don't think I carry gold coin with me, do you? You'd have me give thieves a good chance to steal it? Your father trusted me many a time. And you, Master William, should take after your father.

THE DRAPER. I like my money cash.

PATELIN. It's there waiting for you, good Master Draper. You can come for it, I hope.

THE DRAPER. It's bad custom to sell on credit.

PATELIN. Did I ask you for credit; for a month, a week, a day? Come to my house at noon, and you will find your money ready. Does that satisfy you?

THE DRAPER. I prefer my money cash, right on the purchase. . . .

PATELIN. And then, Master William, you have not been to my house for I don't know how long. Your father was there many a time—but you don't seem to care for poor folk like myself.

THE DRAPER. It's we merchants who are poor. We have no bags of gold lying idle for investments.

PATELIN. They are there, Master, waiting for you. And my good wife put a fine goose on the spit just when I left. You can have a tender wing. Your father always liked it.

THE DRAPER. Perhaps. . . . It's true. I haven't been to

your house for a long time. I'll come at noon, Master Patelin, and bring the cloth with me.

PATELIN [*snatching the cloth from him*]. Oh, I would never trouble you. I can carry it.

THE DRAPER. But . . .

PATELIN. No, good Sir, not for the wealth of the East. I would not think of asking *you* to carry it for *me*.

THE DRAPER. I'd rather . . . well . . . I'll soon be there, Master. I'll come before the noon meal. Don't forget the nine francs.

PATELIN. Aye, I'll not. And there'll be a bottle of red wine . . . and a fine fat goose. Be certain to come. [*Exit PATELIN.*]

THE DRAPER. That I will right soon. Ho, ho, ho—ha, ha, ha—the fool! A good bargain he got! Twenty-one sous the yard. It isn't worth one-half that. And on top of it a fine dinner . . . Burgundy wine and a roasted goose! For a customer like that every day! Now I'll take in my cloth. I'll soon to his house. [*Takes up the cloth and leaves.*]

SCENE III.

The back curtains are drawn aside showing PATELIN'S chamber.

PATELIN [*running in*]. Wife, wife . . . [GUILLEMETTE enters, the old gown in her hand.] Well, Madam . . . now . . . I've got it . . . right here I have it. What did I tell you?

GUILLEMETTE. What have you?

PATELIN. Something you desire greatly. But what are you doing with this old rag? I think it will do well for a bed for your cat. I did promise you a new gown and get you one I did.

GUILLEMETTE. What's got into your head? Did you drink anything on the way?

PATELIN. And it's paid for, Madam. It's paid for, I tell you.

GUILLEMETTE. Are you making sport of me? What are you plappering!

PATELIN. I have it right here.

GUILLEMETTE. What have you?

PATELIN. Cloth fit for the Queen of Sheba. [*Displaying the cloth.*] Here it is!

GUILLEMETTE. Holy Virgin! Where did you steal it? Who'll pay for it? What kind of a scrape have you got into now?

PATELIN. You need not worry, good Dame. It's paid for . . . and a good price at that.

GUILLEMETTE. Why, how much did it cost? You did not have a copper when you left.

PATELIN. It cost nine francs, fair lady . . . a bottle of red wine . . . and the wing of a roasted goose.

GUILLEMETTE. Are you crazy? You had no money, no goose!!!

PATELIN. Aye, aye, that I did. I paid for it as it behooves one of the learned profession of law: in promissory statements. And the merchant who took them is no fool either, oh, no; not a fool at all; but a very wise man and a shrewd. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Who was he? How . . .

PATELIN. He is the king of asses, the Pope of Idiots, the chancellor of baboons . . . our worthy neighbor, the long-nosed draper, Master Joceaulme.

GUILLEMETTE. Will you cease this jabbering and tell me how it happened? How did he come to trust you? There is no worse skinflint in town than he.

PATELIN. Ah, wife! My head! My knowledge of the law! I turned him into a noble and fine lord. I told him what a jewel his father was; I laid on him all the nine virtues thick as wax, and . . . in the end he trusted me most willingly with six yards of his fine cloth.

GUILLEMETTE. Ho, ho, ho, you are a marvel! And when does he expect to get paid?

PATELIN. By noon.

GUILLEMETTE. Holy Lord, what will we do when he comes for the money?

PATELIN. He'll be here for it and soon to boot. He must

be dreaming even now of his nine francs, and his wine, and the goose. Oh, we'll give him a goose! Now you get the bed ready and I'll get in.

GUILLEMETTE. What for?

PATELIN. As soon as he comes and asks for me, swear by all the Saints that I've been in bed here for the last two months. Tell it in a sad voice and with tears in your eyes. And if he says anything, shout at him to speak lower. If he cries: "My cloth, my money," tell him he is crazy, that I haven't been from bed for weeks. And if he doesn't go with that, I'll dance him a little tune that'll make him wonder whether he is on earth or in hell.

[PATELIN *puts on his nightgown and cap*. GUILLEMETTE *goes to the door and returns quickly*.]

GUILLEMETTE. He is coming, he is coming; what if he arrests you?

PATELIN. Don't worry; just do what I tell you. Quick, hide the cloth under the bedclothes. Don't forget. I've been sick for two months.

GUILLEMETTE. Quick, quick, here he is.

[PATELIN *gets into bed and draws the curtains*. GUILLEMETTE *sits down and begins to mend the old dress*. THE DRAPER *enters*.]

THE DRAPER. Good day, fair Dame.

GUILLEMETTE. Sh . . . for the Saints' sake. Speak lower.

THE DRAPER. Why? What's the matter?

GUILLEMETTE. You don't know!

THE DRAPER. Where is he?

GUILLEMETTE. Alas! Nearer to Paradise than to Earth.

[*Begins to cry*.]

THE DRAPER. Who?

GUILLEMETTE. How can you be so heartless and ask me that, when you know he has been in bed for the last eleven weeks?

THE DRAPER. Who?

GUILLEMETTE. My husband.

THE DRAPER. Who?

GUILLEMETTE. My husband—Master Pierre, once a lawyer . . . and now a sick man . . . on his death-bed.

THE DRAPER. What!!!!

GUILLEMETTE [*crying*]. You have not heard of it? Alas! And . . .

THE DRAPER. And who was it just took six yards of cloth from my shop?

GUILLEMETTE. Alas! How am I to know? It was surely not he.

THE DRAPER. You must be dreaming, good woman. Are you his wife? The wife of Pierre Patelin, the lawyer?

GUILLEMETTE. That I am, good Sir.

THE DRAPER. Then it was your husband, who was such a good friend of my father, who came to my shop a quarter of an hour ago and bought six yards of cloth for nine francs. And now I am here for my money. Where is he?

GUILLEMETTE. This is no time for jesting, good Sir.

THE DRAPER. Are you crazy? I want my money, that's all.

GUILLEMETTE. Don't scream. It's little sleep he gets as it is, and here you come squealing like a dying pig. He has been in bed for nigh twelve weeks and hardly slept three nights.

THE DRAPER. Who? What are you talking about?

GUILLEMETTE. Who! My poor sick husband. [*Weeps.*]

THE DRAPER. Come! What's this? Stop that fooling. I want my money, my nine francs.

GUILLEMETTE [*screaming*]. Don't scream so loud. He is dying.

THE DRAPER. But that's a black lie. He was at my shop, but a quarter of an hour ago.

PATELIN [*groaning from behind the curtain*]. Au, au, au . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Ah, there he is on his death bed. He has been there for thirteen weeks yesterday without eating as much as a fly.

THE DRAPER. What are you talking about? He was at

my shop just now and bought six yards of cloth . . . blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE. How can you make sport of me? Good Master William, don't you see how he is! Do speak lower. Noise puts him in agony.

THE DRAPER. The devil speak lower! It's you who are howling. Give me my money, and I'll not speak at all.

GUILLEMETTE [*screaming*]. He is deadly sick. This is no time for fooling. Stop screaming. What is it you want?

THE DRAPER. I want my money, or the cloth . . . the cloth he bought from me only a little while ago.

GUILLEMETTE. What are you talking about, my good man? There is something strange in your voice.

THE DRAPER. You see, good lady, your husband, Pierre Patelin, the learned counselor, who was such a good friend of my father, came to my shop but a quarter of an hour ago and chose six yards of blue cloth . . . and then told me to come to his house to get the money and . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Ha, ha, ha, what a fine joke. You seem to be in good humor to-day, Master Draper? To-day? . . . When he has been in bed for fourteen weeks . . . on the point of death! [*She screams louder and louder all the time.*] To-day, hey! Why do you come to make sport of me? Get out, get out!

THE DRAPER. I will. Give me my money first . . . or give me my cloth. Where is he with it?

GUILLEMETTE. Ah me! He is very sick and refuses to eat a bite.

THE DRAPER. I am speaking about my cloth. If he does not want it, or hasn't the money, I'll gladly take it back. He took it this morning. I'll swear to it. Ask him yourself. I saw him and spoke to him. A piece of blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE. Are you cracked or have you been drinking?

THE DRAPER [*becoming frantic*]. He took six yards of cloth, blue cloth.

GUILLEMETTE. What do I care whether it is green or blue? My husband has not left the house for the last fifteen weeks.

THE DRAPER. May the Lord bless me! But I am sure I saw him. It was he I am sure.

GUILLEMETTE. Have you no heart? I have had enough of your fooling.

THE DRAPER. Damn it all! If you think I am a fool . . .

PATELIN [*behind the curtain*]. Au, au, au, come and raise my pillow. Stop the braying of that ass! Everything is black and yellow! Drive these black beasts away! Marmara, carimari, carimara!

THE DRAPER. It's he!

GUILLEMETTE. Yes, it is; alas!

THE DRAPER. Good Master Patelin, I've come for my nine francs, . . . which you promised me . . .

PATELIN [*sitting up and sticking his head out between the curtains*]. Ha, you dog . . . come here. Shut the door. Rub the soles of my feet . . . tickle my toes. . . . Drive these devils away. It's a monk; there, up he goes . . .

THE DRAPER. What's this? Are you crazy?

PATELIN [*getting out of bed*]. Ha . . . do you see him? A black monk flying in the air with the draper hanging on his nose. Catch him . . . quick. [*Speaking right in THE DRAPER's face, who retreats.*] The cat! The monk! Up he flies, and there are ten little devils tweaking your long nose! Heigh, ho!

[*Goes back to bed, falling on it, seemingly exhausted.*]

GUILLEMETTE [*in loud lamentations*]. Now see what you have done.

THE DRAPER. But what does this mean? . . . I don't understand it.

GUILLEMETTE. Don't you see, don't you see!

THE DRAPER. It serves me right; why did I ever sell on credit? But I sold it, I am certain of that, and I would swear 'twas to him this morning. Did he become sick since he returned?

GUILLEMETTE. Are you beginning that joke all over again?

THE DRAPER. I am sure I sold it to him. Ah, but this

may be just a cooked up story. By God! . . . tell me, have you a goose on the spit?

GUILLEMETTE. A goose on the spit! No-o-o-o, not on the spit! You are the nearest. . . . But I've had enough of this. Get out and leave me in peace.

THE DRAPER. Maybe you are right. I am commencing to doubt it all. Don't cry. I must think this over for a while. But . . . the devil. I am sure I had six yards of cloth . . . and he chose the blue. I gave it to him with my own hands. Yet . . . here he is in bed sick . . . fifteen weeks. But he was at my shop a little while ago. "Come to my house and eat some goose," he said. Never, never, holy Lord, will I trust any one again.

GUILLEMETTE. Perhaps your memory is getting wobbly with age. I think you had better go and look before you talk. Maybe the cloth is still there.

[Exit THE DRAPER, across the front stage and into his shop.]

PATELIN [getting up cautiously and speaking low]. Is he gone?

GUILLEMETTE. Take care, he may come back.

PATELIN. I can't stand this any longer. [Jumps out.] We put it to him heavy, didn't we, my pretty one, eh? Ho, ho, ho. [Laughs uproariously.]

THE DRAPER [coming from his shop, looking under the table]. The thief, the liar, the damned liar, he did buy . . . steal it? It isn't there. This was all sham. Ha, I'll get it, though. [Runs toward PATELIN's house.] What's this I hear . . . laughing! . . . The robbers. [Rushes in.] You thieves. . . . I want my cloth. . . .

[PATELIN finding no time to get back into bed, gets hold of the broom, puts the frying pan on his head and begins to jump around, straddling the broom stick. GUILLEMETTE can't stop laughing.]

THE DRAPER. Laughing in my very nose, eh! Ah, my money, pay. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. I am laughing for unhappiness. Look, how the poor man is; it is you who have done this, with your bellowing.

PATELIN. Ha. . . . Where is the Guitar? . . . The lady Guitar I married. . . . She gave birth to twenty little Guitars yesterday. Ho, ho. Come, my children. . . . Light the lanterns. Ho, ho, ha. . . . [*Stops, looking intently into the air.*]

THE DRAPER. Damn your jabbering. My money! Please, my money . . . for the cloth. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. Again. . . . Didn't you have enough before? But. . . . Oh. . . . [*Looking intently at him.*] Now I understand!!! Why, I am sure of it. You are mad . . . else you wouldn't talk this way.

THE DRAPER. Oh, Holy Lord . . . perhaps I am.

PATELIN [*begins to jump around as if possessed, playing a thousand and one crazy antics*]. Mère de dieu, la coronade . . . que de l'argent il ne me sonne. Hast understood me, gentle Sir?

THE DRAPER. What's this? I want my money. . . .

GUILLEMETTE. He is speaking in delirium; he once had an uncle in Limoges and it's the language of that country. [PATELIN *gives THE DRAPER a kick and falls down as if exhausted.*]

THE DRAPER. Oh! Oh! Where am I? This is the strangest sickness I ever saw.

GUILLEMETTE [*who runs to her husband*]. Do you see what you have done?

PATELIN [*jumps up and acts still wilder*]. Ha! The devil . . . the green cat . . . with the draper. I am happy. . . . [*Chases THE DRAPER and his wife around the room. GUILLEMETTE seeks protection, clinging to THE DRAPER.*]

GUILLEMETTE. Oh, I am afraid, I am afraid. Help me, kind Sir; he may do me some harm.

THE DRAPER [*running around the room with GUILLEMETTE clinging to him*]. Holy Ghost, what's this? He is bewitching me.

PATELIN [*trying to explain the signs to THE DRAPER, who retreats. PATELIN follows him, whacking the floor and furniture and occasionally getting in one on THE DRAPER. Finally THE DRAPER gets on one side of the bed, and PATELIN*

on the other. In that position he addresses him in a preachy, serious voice.] Et bona dies sit vobis, magister amantissime, pater reverendissime, quomodo brulis?

[Falls on the floor near the bed as if dead.]

GUILLEMETTE. Oh, kind Sir. Help me. He is dead. Help me put him to bed. . . .

[They both drag him into bed.]

THE DRAPER. It were well for me to go, I think. He might die and I might be blamed for it. It must have been more imps or some devils who took my cloth . . . and I came here for the money, led by an evil spirit. It's passing strange . . . but I think I had better go.

[Exit. THE DRAPER goes to his shop. GUILLEMETTE watches, turning every moment to PATELIN who has sat up in bed, warning him not to get out. When THE DRAPER disappears, she turns around and bursts out laughing.]

PATELIN *[jumping out]*. Now, wife, what do you think of me, eh? *[Takes the cloth.]* Oh! Didn't we play a clever game? By Saint Peter, I did not think I could do it so well. He got a hot goose, didn't he? *[Spreading the cloth.]* This'll do for both and there'll be a goodly piece left.

GUILLEMETTE. You are an angel. Oh, ho! And now let us go and begin to cut it up.

[Both exit, and the curtain is drawn.]

SCENE IV.—*The street.*

[JOCEAULME comes from the shop with a piece of cloth under his arm. He is much upset. Looks once more under the table for the cloth which PATELIN took.]

THE DRAPER. The Devil! These hounds. . . . I'll get them yet. Here's a fine piece of cloth! Only the fiend himself, knows who took it—and then that shepherd. To think of it . . . robbing me for years. But him I'll get surely. I'll see him hanged, yet. By the holy Lord I will. *[TIBALD LAMBKIN appears from the other side.]* Ah, here he comes. . . .

THE SHEPHERD *[stutters, thick voice; a typical yokel]*.

God give you a good day, sweet Sir. I greet you, good Sir. . . . I was not sure it was you, good Sir. . . .

THE DRAPER. You were not, eh? You knave; but you will soon know for certain . . . when your head is on the gallows . . . high up. . . .

THE SHEPHERD. Yes, good Sir . . . no . . . I saw the constable . . . and he spoke to me that you want to see me. . . .

THE DRAPER. Oh, no! Not I, my fine thief . . . but the judge.

THE SHEPHERD. Oh, Lord! Why did you summon me? I don't know why. I never killed your sheep.

THE DRAPER. Oh, no, you are a Saint. It's you, you mangy dog . . . all the while you were robbing me of my sheep. But now you'll pay for it with your head. I'll see you hanged.

THE SHEPHERD. Hang by the neck! Oh, Lord! Good Master, have pity.

THE DRAPER. Pity, eh? And you had pity when you were robbing me of my cloth . . . I mean my sheep. Thief, scoundrel, you robber . . . where is my cloth . . . my sheep?

THE SHEPHERD. They died of sickness, Sir . . .

THE DRAPER. You lie, you caitiff, you stole them and now . . .

THE SHEPHERD. It is not so, good Master. I swear. On my soul. . . .

THE DRAPER. You have no soul, you thief. By all the Saints, I'll see you dangling this Saturday. . . .

THE SHEPHERD. Good and sweet Master, won't you please make a settlement . . . and not bring me to court.

THE DRAPER. Away, you thief. I'll make you pay for those six yards . . . I mean those sheep. You just wait.
[Walks off in a fury.]

THE SHEPHERD. Oh, Lord! I must quickly find a lawyer. . . . I've heard of Master Patelin . . . they say no man is better at gulling. It's here he lives. [PATELIN comes just then from his house. When he sees LAMBKIN he tries to get back, fearing it may be THE DRAPER, but on hearing his voice

he stops.] Ho, there, Master! Is it you who are Master Patelin the lawyer?

PATELIN. What is it you want of him?

THE SHEPHERD. I have a little business for him.

PATELIN. Oh! is it that! Well, I am Master Patelin. Good man, tell me the nature of your business. Is it anything pertaining to the law?

THE SHEPHERD. I'll pay well. . . . I am a shepherd, good Master. A poor man, but I can pay well. I need a lawyer for a little case I have.

PATELIN. Come this way, where we can talk lower. Some one might overhear us . . . I mean disturb us. Now good man, what may your business be?

THE SHEPHERD. Good Master Lawyer, teach me what to say to the judge.

PATELIN. What is it you have done, or has some one done you an injustice?

THE SHEPHERD. Must I tell you everything . . . exactly as it happened?

PATELIN. You can tell me the truth, I am your lawyer. . . . But, good friend, counsel is costly.

THE SHEPHERD. I'll pay all right. It's my Master whose sheep I stole who summoned me to the Judge. He is going to have me hanged because I stole his sheep. You see. . . . He paid like a miser. . . . Must I tell you the truth?

PATELIN. I have told you once. You must tell me how everything really happened.

THE SHEPHERD. Well . . . he paid like a miser . . . so I told him some sheep had the hoof sickness and died from it . . . and I buried them far . . . far . . . away, so that the others shouldn't get it. But I really killed them and ate the meat and used the wool for myself,—and he caught me right so that I cannot deny it. Now I beseech you . . . I can pay well—though he has the law on his side . . . tell me . . . whether you cannot beat him. If you can, I'll pay you in fine, gold crowns, sweet Master.

PATELIN. Gold crowns!!! H'm, what's your name?

THE SHEPHERD. Tibald Lambkin, a poor shepherd, but I have a few crowns put aside. You just . . .

PATELIN. What do you intend to pay for this case?

THE SHEPHERD. Will five . . . four crowns be enough, sweet Sir?

PATELIN [*hardly able to contain himself for excitement*]. Ah! . . . Hm . . . well . . . that will be plenty seeing that you are a poor man. But I get much greater sums, friend, I do. . . . Did you say . . . five?

THE SHEPHERD. Yes, sweet Sir.

PATELIN. You'll have to make it six. I may tell you, though, that your case is a good one, and I am sure to win it. But now tell me, are there any witnesses the plaintiff can produce? Those who saw you killing the sheep?

THE SHEPHERD. Not one. . . .

PATELIN. That's fine.

THE SHEPHERD. . . . But more'n a dozen.

PATELIN. That's bad. Hm, let me see now . . . no. . . . [*He seems to hold a deep and learned debate with himself.*] No . . . but. . . . The book says otherwise. [*Suddenly his face lights up.*] By all the Saints, and the nine hundred and ninety-nine Virgins! I've got it . . . ay, what a wonderful idea! Two ideas in one day! You can understand a sly trick, can't you, fellow?

THE SHEPHERD. Can I? Ho, ho, ho, ho. . . .

PATELIN. But you'll pay as you promised.

THE SHEPHERD. Hang me if I don't. But I can't pay if I hang, ho, ho, ho. . . .

PATELIN [*gleefully*]. Now, first, you have never seen me; nor heard of me. . . .

THE SHEPHERD. Oh, no, not that. . . .

PATELIN. Silent until I have finished. Second, you mustn't talk a single word but "Ba." . . . [*Imitating the bleating of a sheep.*] Only bleat like your sheep. No matter what they talk to you. Just say Ba. . . . Even if they call you an ass, or an idiot, or villain, or fool, don't answer anything but Ba. . . . Just as if you were a sheep.

THE SHEPHERD. Oh, I can do that.

PATELIN. Even if I talk to you, say nothing but Ba. . . . And if they split roaring at you, just say Ba. . . . The rest you leave to me. I'll get you out for certain.

THE SHEPHERD. I'll surely not say another word. And I will do it right proper.

PATELIN. Your case is as good as won. But don't forget the seven gold crowns.

THE SHEPHERD. I'll sure not, wise and sweet Master Patelin.

CRIER [*is heard from afar*]. "The court, make room." . . .

PATELIN. Ah, here they come. Don't forget Ba. . . . I'll be there to help you. And . . . the money . . . don't forget that.

[*Attendants, constables, town clerks and villagers enter. Two clerks carry a seat for THE JUDGE which is placed in the center of the stage. THE JUDGE, fat and grouchy, comes to the front, looks about for a moment, then goes to his seat and sits down.*]

THE JUDGE. If there is any business to be done, come to it; the court wants to adjourn.

PATELIN. May heaven bless you and grant you all you desire.

THE JUDGE. Welcome, Sir. May the Saints give you plenty of clients.

[*THE DRAPER now comes running in. PATELIN suddenly realizes that it is against him that THE SHEPHERD must be defended and expresses uneasiness. He hides himself behind the crowd.*]

THE DRAPER. My lawyer is soon coming, your worship. He has a little business elsewhere which is detaining him.

THE JUDGE. You must think I have nothing to do but to wait for your lawyer. You are the plaintiff, aren't you? Bring your complaint. Where is the defendant?

THE DRAPER. Right there, your worship; that lummo shepherd, who has been hiding behind that good citizen there as if he couldn't say Ba. . . . But Your Honor, it's in fear of justice.

THE JUDGE. Both being present! I will examine you. [*To*

THE DRAPER.] Tell me all the facts of your case. Was he in your hire?

THE DRAPER. Yes, Your Lordship. He killed my sheep and after I treated him like a father. . . .

THE JUDGE. Did you pay him a good wage?

PATELIN [*edging up sideways, and covering his face with his hand*]. Your Lordship, I have heard it said that he never paid him a copper for his work.

THE DRAPER [*recognizing PATELIN*]. By all that's holy. . . . You. . . . !!!!!? 'Tis he and no other.

THE JUDGE. Why do you cover your face, Master Patelin?

PATELIN. Oh, your Lordship, I have a terrible toothache.

THE JUDGE. I am sorry for you, for I had one myself the other day. I'll tell you a fine cure, Master. Hold your feet in cold water wherein are three hoofs of a red cow from Gascogne. This'll draw the ache into the nails of your toes and you can then rid yourself of it with great ease by cutting them. 'Tis a sovereign remedy. Try it and see, Master. But let us go on. Come, Master Draper, I am in a hurry.

THE DRAPER [*not heeding THE JUDGE but still staring at PATELIN*]. It's you, isn't it? It's to you I sold six yards of cloth. Where is my money?

THE JUDGE. What is that you are talking about?

PATELIN. His mind is clouded, Your Lordship. He is not accustomed to speaking clearly. Perhaps the defendant will enlighten us. You . . .

THE DRAPER. I am not speaking clearly! You thief . . . liar. . . .

PATELIN. Your worship, I think I understand him now. It's strange how incoherently those who have no legal training speak. I think he means he could have made six yards of cloth from the sheep the shepherd is supposed to have stolen or killed.

THE JUDGE. Aye, so it would seem. Come, Master William, finish your tale.

PATELIN. Get to the facts as the judge directs you.

THE DRAPER. And you dare talk to me like that!

THE JUDGE. Master William, come to your sheep.

[During the rest of the court scene PATELIN works always so as to attract the attention of THE DRAPER every time he tries to talk of his sheep, and so diverts his attention from that and leads him to talk of the cloth. Whenever THE DRAPER talks of his case, PATELIN either sticks his face up to him or places himself in such a position that THE DRAPER must see him.]

THE DRAPER. You see, your Lordship . . . he took my six yards of cloth this morning . . . the thief. . . .

THE JUDGE. Do you think I am a fool or an ass? Either you come to the point or I'll dismiss the case.

PATELIN. Your Worship, let us call the defendant. He, I am sure, will speak clearer than this draper.

THE JUDGE. Yes, that will be wise. Step forward, Shepherd.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . . a . . .

THE JUDGE. What's this, am I a goat?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . . a . . .

PATELIN. Your Lordship, it seems this man is half-witted and thinks himself among his sheep.

THE DRAPER. Damn you! He can talk, and he is not half-witted, either . . . but a thief like you. It was you who took my cloth!

THE JUDGE. Cloth! What are you talking about, anyhow? Now, you either get back to your sheep or I'll dismiss the case.

THE DRAPER. I will, your Lordship, though the other lies as near to my heart, but I'll leave it for another time. That shepherd there . . . he took six yards of cloth . . . I mean, sheep. Your Honor must forgive me. This thief . . . my shepherd, he told me I would get my money . . . for the cloth as soon . . . I mean this shepherd was to watch over my flocks and he played sick when I came to his house. Ah, Master Pierre. . . . He killed my sheep and told me they died from hoof-sickness . . . and I saw him take the cloth . . . I mean he swore he never killed them. And his wife swore he was sick and said he never took the cloth. . . . No, that shepherd there. . . . He took the sheep and made

out that he was crazy. . . . Oh, my Lord! I don't know what . . .

THE JUDGE [*leaping up*]. Keep quiet, you don't know what you are talking about. You are crazy. I have listened to your idiotic talk about sheep, and cloth, and wool, and money. What is it you want here? Either you answer sensibly, or . . . this is your last chance.

PATELIN. There is surely something strange about this poor man's talk, and I would advise that a physician be consulted. At times, though, it seems as if he were talking about some money he owes this poor shepherd.

THE DRAPER. You thief! You robber! You might at least keep quiet. Where is my cloth? You have it. . . . You are not sick.

THE JUDGE. What has he? Who isn't sick? Are you going to talk of your business or not?

THE DRAPER. He has it as certain as there is a God in heaven. But I'll speak of this later. Now, I'll attend to this thief, this shepherd.

PATELIN. This shepherd cannot answer the charges himself, Your Lordship. I will gladly give my services to defend him.

THE JUDGE. You won't get much for your pains.

PATELIN. Ah, but the knowledge that I am doing a kind and honest deed—and then I may be able to stop this haggling which annoys Your Lordship so much.

THE JUDGE. I'd be greatly thankful.

THE DRAPER. You'll defend him . . . you thief . . . you. . .

THE JUDGE. Now Master William, you keep quiet or I'll have you put in the stocks. I have listened long enough to your idiotic gab. Proceed, Master Patelin.

PATELIN. I thank Your Lordship. Now, come on, my good fellow. It's for your own good I am working as you heard me say. Just because I would do you a kind deed. Answer everything well and direct.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . . a . . .

PATELIN. Come, I am your lawyer, not a lamb.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. What's Ba. . . ? Are you crazy? Tell me, did this man pay you money for your work?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN [*seemingly losing his temper*]. You idiot! Answer, it's I, your lawyer, who is talking to you. Answer.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

THE DRAPER [*who has listened open-mouthed and bewildered*]. But, Your Lordship, he can talk when he wants to. He spoke to me this morning.

PATELIN [*severely*]. Everything happened to you this morning, Master Joceaulme. Now it seems to me, it would be far wiser for you to send this shepherd back to his sheep, he is used to their company far more than to that of men. It does not look as if this fool had sense enough to kill a fly, let alone a sheep.

THE DRAPER. You . . . you . . . robber . . . liar!!!

THE JUDGE. I honestly think they are both crazy.

PATELIN. It seems as if Your Lordship is right.

THE DRAPER. I am crazy! You scoundrel! You robber! Where is my cloth? They are both thieves. . . .

THE JUDGE. Keep quiet, I say.

THE DRAPER. But, Your Lordship!

THE JUDGE. All you get is vexation, in dealing with dolts and idiots, be they male or female, so says the law. To finish this wrangling the court is adjourned.

THE DRAPER. And my cloth . . . my money . . . I mean my sheep! Is there no justice? Will you not listen to me?

THE JUDGE. Eh, listen to you, you miser? You dare scoff at justice? You hire half crazy people; and then you don't pay them, then you bellow something about cloth which has nothing to do with the case and expect me to listen to you?

THE DRAPER. But he took my cloth . . . and he killed my sheep. I swear to you. There he stands, the thief.

[*Pointing to PATELIN.*]

THE JUDGE. Stop your bellowing. I discharge this half-witted shepherd. Get home and don't ever come in my sight again no matter how many bailiffs summon you.

PATELIN [*to THE SHEPHERD*]. Say thanks to his Lordship.
THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

THE JUDGE. By all the Saints, never have I come upon such a nest of idiots!

THE DRAPER. My cloth gone . . . my sheep. . . .

THE JUDGE. Huh! You. . . . Well, I have business elsewhere. May I never see your like again. The court is adjourned. Good day, Master Patelin.

PATELIN. A joyous day to you.

[*All leave except PATELIN, THE DRAPER, and THE SHEPHERD.*]

THE DRAPER. You thieves . . . you scoundrels! You. . . . You. . . .

PATELIN. Don't shout yourself hoarse, good Master Joceaulme.

THE DRAPER. You stole my cloth and played crazy . . . and now it was because of you, that I lost my sheep. . . .

PATELIN. A fine tale! Do you think any one will believe you?

THE DRAPER. I am not blind. Didn't I see you dancing this morning? I saw you. . . .

PATELIN. Are you so certain? Good Sir, it may have been Jean de Noyon. He resembles me very much.

THE DRAPER. But I know you when I see you. You screamed and acted mad shouting a tale of dogs and . . .

PATELIN. Perhaps you imagined it all. Go back to my house and see if I am not *still* there.

THE DRAPER [*looks much puzzled*]. May the Lord. . . . Perhaps. . . . But I'll go to your house and if I don't find you there, I'll go to the Judge and see to it that he listens to my story. I'll get a lawyer from Paris. [*To THE SHEPHERD, who has been standing at a safe distance.*] You thief! I'll get you yet. [*To PATELIN.*] I'll go to your house now.

PATELIN. That's a wise action.

[*Exit THE DRAPER.*]

PATELIN. Now Tibald, my fellow. What do you think of me? Didn't we do a fine piece of work?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. Yes. Ho, ho—wasn't it great!

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. No one is near now; your Master is gone. It was a great idea, wasn't it? This legal stroke. You may speak now without fear.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. I said you could speak without fear, no one is near. Where is the money?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. I can't stay with you all day. What is this game?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. How now? Come, I have business elsewhere.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN. What do you mean? You are not going to pay?

THE SHEPHERD [*with a grin*]. Ba . . .

PATELIN. Yes, you played your rôle well, good Lambkin. But now it's over. Next time you may count on me again. Now my money; the six crowns.

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN [*sees the game now, stops. In a somewhat pathetic voice*]. Is that all I am going to get for my work?

THE SHEPHERD. Ba . . .

PATELIN [*getting furious*]. By the Holy Lord, I'll have a bailiff after you, you thief . . . you scoundrel . . . you robber. . . .

THE SHEPHERD. Ho, ho, ho. . . . Ba. . . ! The Judge said I need never come back. And—ho, ho, ho, I never knew you. . . . Ba . . . a . . . ! [*Runs out.*]

PATELIN [*silent for a time, then grinning pathetically*]. Alas! 'Tis only paying me in my own coin. . . . Nevertheless 'twas a fine idea. . . . [*Exit.*]

CURTAIN

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

(1895)

BY

OSCAR WILDE

CHARACTERS

JOHN WORTHING, J.P.
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF.
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D.D.
MERRIMAN, *butler*.
LANE, *manservant*.
LADY BRACKNELL.
HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX.
CECILY CARDEW.
MISS PRISM, *governess*.

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY.

- ACT I. Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.
ACT II. The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.
ACT III. Drawing-Room of the Manor House, Woolton.
Time—*The Present*.
Place—*London*.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

ACT I

SCENE.—*Morning-room in ALGERNON's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

[LANE is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, ALGERNON enters.]

ALGERNON. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGERNON. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

ALGERNON [*inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa.*] Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGERNON. Why is it that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGERNON. Good Heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE. I believe it is a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young woman.

ALGERNON [*languidly*]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGERNON. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [LANE goes out.]

ALGERNON. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

[Enter LANE.]

LANE. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

[Enter JACK. LANE goes out.]

ALGERNON. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGERNON [*stiffly*]. I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*sitting down on the sofa*]. In the country.

ALGERNON. What on earth do you do there?

JACK. [*pulling off his gloves*]. When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGERNON. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*airily*]. Oh, neighbours, neighbours.

ALGERNON. Got nice neighbours in your part of Shropshire?

JACK. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGERNON. How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich.*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGERNON. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK. How perfectly delightful!

ALGERNON. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK. May I ask why?

ALGERNON. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGERNON. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK. How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGERNON. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGERNON. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[JACK puts out his hand to take a sandwich. ALGERNON at once interferes.] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [Takes one and eats it.]

JACK. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGERNON. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [Takes plate from below.] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [advancing to table and helping himself]. And very good bread and butter it is, too.

ALGERNON. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if

you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK. Why on earth do you say that?

ALGERNON. Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGERNON. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK. Your consent!

ALGERNON. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell.*]

JACK. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

[*Enter LANE.*]

ALGERNON. Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE. Yes, sir. [*LANE goes out.*]

JACK. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGERNON. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

JACK. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

[*Enter LANE with the cigarette case on a salver.* ALGERNON takes it at once. *Lane goes out.*]

ALGERNON. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK. Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right what-

soever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGERNON. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGERNON. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know any one of that name.

JACK. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON. Your aunt!

JACK. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON [*retreating to back of sofa*]. But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading*.] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK [*moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*]. My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For Heaven's sake, give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows ALGERNON round the room.*]

ALGERNON. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGERNON. You have always told me it was Ernest. I

have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

JACK. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGERNON. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGERNON. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGERNON. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGERNON. Here it is, ~~see~~ [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

JACK. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a little boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me as her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate,

lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGERNON. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK. That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGERNON. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburied all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGERNON. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGERNON. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK. What on earth do you mean?

ALGERNON. You have invented a very useful younger brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's ex-

traordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night; for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere to-night.

ALGERNON. I know. You are absolutely careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGERNON. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relatives. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, to-night. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed, I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGERNON. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that

I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGERNON. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*sententiously*]. That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

ALGERNON. Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK. For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGERNON. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you to-night at Willis's?

JACK. I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGERNON. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

[*Enter LANE.*]

LANE. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax. [ALGERNON goes forward to meet them. Enter LADY BRACKNELL and GWENDOLEN.]

LADY BRACKNELL. Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGERNON. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees JACK and bows to him with icy coldness.*]

ALGERNON [*to GWENDOLEN*]. Dear me, you are smart!

GWENDOLEN. I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments, and I intend to develop in *many*

directions. [GWENDOLEN and JACK sit down together in the corner.]

LADY BRACKNELL. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGERNON. Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table.*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGERNON [*picking up empty plate in horror*]. Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*gravely*]. There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGERNON. No cucumbers!

LANE. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

ALGERNON. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [*Goes out.*]

ALGERNON. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY BRACKNELL. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGERNON. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY BRACKNELL. It certainly has changed its colour. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON crosses and hands tea.] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you to-night, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGERNON. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you to-night after all.

LADY BRACKNELL [*frowning*]. I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGERNON. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with JACK.*] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY BRACKNELL. It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGERNON. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY BRACKNELL. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with that question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be much obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever he had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGERNON. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music people don't talk. But I'll run over the programme I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY BRACKNELL. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following ALGERNON.*] I'm sure the programme will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked,

which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe it so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWENDOLEN. Certainly, mamma. [*LADY BRACKNELL and ALGERNON go into the music-room, GWENDOLEN remains behind.*]

JACK. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK. I do mean something else.

GWENDOLEN. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence. . . .

GWENDOLEN. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*nervously*]. Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [*JACK looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits, I am told: and my ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK. You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWENDOLEN. Passionately!

JACK. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWENDOLEN. My own Ernest!

JACK. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWENDOLEN. But your name is Ernest.

JACK. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me then?

GWENDOLEN [*glibly*]. Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think that name suits me at all.

GWENDOLEN. It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWENDOLEN. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations. . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWENDOLEN. Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*astounded*]. Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWENDOLEN. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWENDOLEN. I think it would be an admirable opportu-

nity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK. Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK. You know what I have got to say to you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes on his knees.*]

GWENDOLEN. Of course I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK. My own one, I have never loved any one in the world but you.

GWENDOLEN. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

[*Enter LADY BRACKNELL.*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWENDOLEN. Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY BRACKNELL. Finished what, may I ask?

GWENDOLEN. I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together.*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Pardon me, you are not engaged to any one. When you do become engaged to some one, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise, pleasant or unpleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWENDOLEN [*reproachfully*]. Mamma!

LADY BRACKNELL. In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN goes to the door. She and JACK blow kisses to each other behind LADY BRACKNELL'S back. LADY BRACKNELL looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWENDOLEN. Yes, mamma. [Goes out, looking back at JACK.]

LADY BRACKNELL [*sitting down*]. You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.]

JACK. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL [*pencil and note-book in hand*]. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK. Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*after some hesitation*]. I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY BRACKNELL [*makes a note in her book*]. In land, or in investments?

JACK. In investments, chiefly.

LADY BRACKNELL. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY BRACKNELL. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY BRACKNELL. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK. 149.

LADY BRACKNELL [*shaking her head*]. The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY BRACKNELL [*sternly*]. Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY BRACKNELL. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine

with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor affairs. Are your parents living?

JACK. I have lost both my parents.

LADY BRACKNELL. Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY BRACKNELL. Found!

JACK. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY BRACKNELL. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*gravely*]. In a hand-bag.

LADY BRACKNELL. A hand-bag?

JACK [*very seriously*]. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

LADY BRACKNELL. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY BRACKNELL. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK. Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY BRACKNELL. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I

presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK. May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to ensure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY BRACKNELL. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing! [LADY BRACKNELL sweeps out in majestic indignation.]

JACK. Good morning! [ALGERNON, from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March. JACK looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.] For goodness' sake, don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are! [The music stops, and ALGERNON enters cheerily.]

ALGERNON. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a

myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGERNON. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON. It isn't!

JACK. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGERNON. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK. Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGERNON. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK. Is that clever?

ALGERNON. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGERNON. We have.

JACK. I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGERNON. The fools? Oh! about the clever people of course.

JACK. What fools!

ALGERNON. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*in a very patronising manner*]. My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet,

refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGERNON. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGERNON. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGERNON. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGERNON. Of course it isn't!

JACK. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGERNON. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has got a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGERNON. I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGERNON. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGERNON. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if

we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK [*irritably*]. Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGERNON. Well, I'm hungry.

JACK. I never knew you when you weren't.

ALGERNON. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theatre?

JACK. Oh, no! I loathe listening.

ALGERNON. Well, let us go to the Club?

JACK. Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGERNON. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

JACK. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGERNON. Well, what shall we do?

JACK. Nothing!

ALGERNON. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

[*Enter LANE.*]

LANE. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter GWENDOLEN. LANE goes out.*]

ALGERNON. Gwendolen, upon my word.

GWENDOLEN. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGERNON. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWENDOLEN. Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [*ALGERNON retires to the fireplace.*]

JACK. My own darling!

GWENDOLEN. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else,

and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK. Dear Gwendolen.

GWENDOLEN. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma, with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibres of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me. Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire.

[ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

GWENDOLEN. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK. My own one!

GWENDOLEN. How long do you remain in town?

JACK. Till Monday.

GWENDOLEN. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGERNON. Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWENDOLEN. You may also ring the bell.

JACK. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWENDOLEN. Certainly.

JACK [*to LANE, who now enters*]. I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE. Yes, sir. [JACK and GWENDOLEN go off. LANE presents several letters on a salver to ALGERNON. It is to be surmised that they are bills, as ALGERNON, after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.]

ALGERNON. A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. To-morrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. I shall probably not be back till Monday.

You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket, and all the Bunbury suits . . .

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

ALGERNON. I hope to-morrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE. It never is, sir.

ALGERNON. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

[*Enter JACK. LANE goes off.*]

JACK. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! the only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON is laughing immoderately.] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGERNON. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all.

JACK. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGERNON. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGERNON. Nobody ever does. [JACK looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room. ALGERNON lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff and smiles.]

ACT II.

SCENE.—Garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.

[MISS PRISM discovered seated at the table. CECILY is at the back, watering flowers.]

MISS PRISM [*calling*]. Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECILY [*coming over very slowly*]. But I don't like Ger-

man. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

MISS PRISM. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECILY. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

MISS PRISM [*drawing herself up*]. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanour is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECILY. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

MISS PRISM. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

CECILY. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [CECILY *begins to write in her diary.*]

MISS PRISM [*shaking her head*]. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that, according to his own brother's admission, is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favour of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows, so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECILY. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down, I should probably forget all about them.

MISS PRISM. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECILY. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

MISS PRISM. Do not speak slightly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECILY. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

MISS PRISM. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECILY. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

MISS PRISM. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECILY [*smiling*]. But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

MISS PRISM [*rising and advancing*]. Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

[*Enter CANON CHASUBLE.*]

CHASUBLE. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECILY. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr. Chasuble.

MISS PRISM. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECILY. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHASUBLE. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECILY. Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHASUBLE. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to

be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [Miss PRISM *glares*.] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

MISS PRISM. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHASUBLE. Ah yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man, his brother, seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

MISS PRISM. Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

CHASUBLE [*bowing*]. A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong.

MISS PRISM. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHASUBLE. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

MISS PRISM. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side.

[*Goes down the garden with Dr. CHASUBLE.*]

CECILY [*picks up books and throws them back on table*]. Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

[*Enter MERRIMAN with a card on a salver.*]

MERRIMAN. Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECILY [*takes the card and reads it*]. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECILY. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRIMAN. Yes, Miss.

[MERRIMAN goes off.]

CECILY. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else.

[Enter ALGERNON, very gay and debonair.]

He does!

ALGERNON [*raising his hat*]. You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECILY. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON is rather taken aback.] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGERNON. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECILY. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGERNON [*looks at her in amazement*]. Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

CECILY. I am glad to hear it.

ALGERNON. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECILY. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGERNON. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECILY. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGERNON. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECILY. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGERNON. No; the appointment is in London.

CECILY. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to

keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGERNON. About my what?

CECILY. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGERNON. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECILY. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

ALGERNON. Australia! I'd sooner die.

CECILY. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGERNON. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGERNON. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. I'm afraid I've not time, this afternoon.

ALGERNON. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECILY. That is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGERNON. I will. I feel better already.

CECILY. You are looking a little worse.

ALGERNON. That is because I am hungry.

CECILY. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGERNON. Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

CECILY. A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors.*]

ALGERNON. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECILY. Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

ALGERNON. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECILY. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGERNON. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [CECILY puts the rose in his button-hole.] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECILY. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGERNON. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECILY. Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

[They pass into the house. MISS PRISM and DR. CHASUBLE return.]

MISS PRISM. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHASUBLE [with a scholar's shudder]. Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

MISS PRISM [sententiously]. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHASUBLE. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

MISS PRISM. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHASUBLE. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

MISS PRISM. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE starts.] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHASUBLE. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

[Enter JACK slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hatband and black gloves.]

MISS PRISM. Mr. Worthing!

CHASUBLE. Mr. Worthing?

MISS PRISM. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*shakes MISS PRISM's hand in a tragic manner*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK. My brother.

MISS PRISM. More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHASUBLE. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*shaking his head*]. Dead! --

CHASUBLE. Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

MISS PRISM. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHASUBLE. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHASUBLE. Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHASUBLE. Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK. A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE [*raising his hand*]. Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us is perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

JACK. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE. In Paris! [*Shakes his head*] I fear that

hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [All *sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation, and festal days. The last time I delivered it, it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontentment among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK. Ah, that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

MISS PRISM. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHASUBLE. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK. Oh, yes.

MISS PRISM [*bitterly*]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE. But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK. I don't remember anything about it.

CHASUBLE. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK. I certainly intend to have. Of course, I don't know

if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK. Immersion!

CHASUBLE. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK. Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you.

CHASUBLE. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

JACK. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHASUBLE. Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials at the moment are often blessings in disguise.

MISS PRISM. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

[*Enter CECILY from the house.*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them.

MISS PRISM. Cecily!

CHASUBLE. My child! my child! [*CECILY goes towards JACK; he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

CECILY. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy? You look as if you had a toothache and I have such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK. Who?

CECILY. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECILY. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack?

[Runs back into the house.]

CHASUBLE. These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

[Enter ALGERNON and CECILY hand in hand. They come slowly up to JACK.]

JACK. Good heavens! *[Motions ALGERNON away.]*

ALGERNON. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. *[JACK glares at him and does not take his hand.]*

CECILY. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK. Oh, he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECILY. Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGERNON. Of course I admit that the faults were all on

my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECILY. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest I will never forgive you.

JACK. Never forgive me?

CECILY. Never, never, never!

JACK. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with ALGERNON and glares.*]

CHASUBLE. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM. Cecily, you will come with us.

CECILY. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHASUBLE. You have done a beautiful action to-day, dear child.

MISS PRISM. We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECILY. I feel very happy. [*They all go off.*]

JACK. You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

[*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

MERRIMAN. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK. What?

MERRIMAN. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK. His luggage?

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

ALGERNON. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house.*]

ALGERNON. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK. Yes, you have.

ALGERNON. I haven't heard anyone calling me.

JACK. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGERNON. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK. I can quite understand that.

ALGERNON. Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGERNON. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

ALGERNON. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

JACK. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house.*]

ALGERNON. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily, and that is everything. [*Enter CECILY at the*

back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECILY. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGERNON. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECILY. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGERNON. He's going to send me away.

CECILY. Then have we got to part?

ALGERNON. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECILY. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGERNON. Thank you.

[*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

MERRIMAN.* The dog-cart is at the door, sir. [ALGERNON *looks appealingly at CECILY.*]

CECILY. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRIMAN. Yes, miss. [*Exit MERRIMAN.*]

ALGERNON. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECILY. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me, I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.*]

ALGERNON. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECILY. Oh, no. [*Puts her hand over it.*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGERNON [*somewhat taken aback*]. Ahem! Ahem!

CECILY. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough.

[Writes as ALGERNON speaks.]

ALGERNON [*speaking very rapidly*]. Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECILY. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGERNON. Cecily!

[Enter MERRIMAN.]

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN [*looks at CECILY, who makes no sign*]. Yes, sir. [MERRIMAN retires.]

CECILY. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGERNON. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECILY. You silly, you! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGERNON. For the last three months?

CECILY. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGERNON. But how did we become engaged?

CECILY. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGERNON. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECILY. On the fourth of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other, and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGERNON. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECILY. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.*]

ALGERNON. My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECILY. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I wrote always three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGERNON. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily?

CECILY. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGERNON. But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECILY. Of course it was. On the twenty-second of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "To-day I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGERNON. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECILY. It would hardly have been a really serious engage-

ment if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGERNON [*crossing to her, and kneeling*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECILY. You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it? *Ernest*

ALGERNON. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECILY. I am so glad.

ALGERNON. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECILY. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGERNON. Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

CECILY. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [*ALGERNON rises, CECILY also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGERNON. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECILY. But what name?

ALGERNON. Oh, any name you like—Algernon, for instance. . . .

CECILY. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGERNON. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her.*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECILY [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rec-

tor here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the church?

CECILY. Oh, yes. Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGERNON. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

CECILY. Oh!

ALGERNON. I sha'n't be away more than half an hour.

CECILY. Considering that we have been engaged since February the fourteenth, and that I only met you to-day for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGERNON. I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

CECILY. What an impetuous boy he is. I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

[*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

MERRIMAN. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRIMAN. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN. Yes, miss. [*Goes out.*]

CECILY. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

[*Enter MERRIMAN.*]

MERRIMAN. Miss Fairfax.

[*Enter GWENDOLEN.*]

[*Exit MERRIMAN.*]

CECILY [*advancing to meet her*]. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLEN. Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECILY. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWENDOLEN [*still standing up*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY. With pleasure!

GWENDOLEN. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECILY. If you wish.

GWENDOLEN. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECILY. I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

GWENDOLEN. Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECILY. I don't think so.

GWENDOLEN. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECILY. Oh, not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWENDOLEN [*after examining CECILY carefully through a lorgnette*]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY. Oh, no, I live here.

GWENDOLEN [*severely*]. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some other female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECILY. Oh, no. I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.

GWENDOLEN. Indeed?

CECILY. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWENDOLEN. Your guardian?

CECILY. Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLEN. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you. But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly——

CECILY. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWENDOLEN. Well, to speak with perfect candour, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honour. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECILY. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLEN. Yes.

CECILY. Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWENDOLEN [*sitting down again*]. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECILY. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWENDOLEN. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY. Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWENDOLEN [*enquiringly*]. I beg your pardon?

CECILY [*rather shy and confidingly*]. Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLEN [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

CECILY [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

GWENDOLEN [*examines diary through her lorgnette carefully*]. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid I have the prior claim.

CECILY. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical

anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLEN [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLEN. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLEN [*satirically*]. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

[*Enter MERRIMAN, followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate-stand. CECILY is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*]

MERRIMAN. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

CECILY [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual. [MERRIMAN begins to clear and lay cloth. A long pause. CECILY and GWENDOLEN glare at each other.]

GWENDOLEN. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECILY. Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWENDOLEN. Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECILY [*sweetly*]. I suppose that is why you live in town? [GWENDOLEN bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.]

GWENDOLEN [*looking around*]. Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECILY. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWENDOLEN. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECILY. Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWENDOLEN. Personally, I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECILY. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN [*with elaborate politeness*]. Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY [*sweetly*]. Sugar?

GWENDOLEN [*superciliously*]. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [*CECILY looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

CECILY [*severely*]. Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLEN [*in a bored manner*]. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowadays.

CECILY [*cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray.*] Hand that to Miss Fairfax. [*MERRIMAN does so, and goes out with footman. GWENDOLEN drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

GWENDOLEN. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECILY [*rising*]. To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWENDOLEN. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never

deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECILY. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

[*Enter JACK.*]

GWENDOLEN [*catching sight of him*]. Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK. Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

GWENDOLEN [*drawing back*]. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to CECILY.*]

JACK [*laughing*]. To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWENDOLEN. Thank you. You may. [*Offers her cheek.*]

CECILY [*very sweetly*]. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWENDOLEN. I beg your pardon?

CECILY. This is Uncle Jack.

GWENDOLEN [*receding*]. Jack! Oh!

[*Enter ALGERNON.*]

CECILY. Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON [*goes straight over to CECILY without noticing anyone else*]. My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

CECILY [*drawing back*]. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON [*looking around*]. To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECILY. Yes, to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGERNON [*laughing*]. Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECILY. Thank you. [*Presents her cheek to be kissed.*]
You may. [*ALGERNON kisses her.*]

GWENDOLEN. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY [*breaking away from ALGERNON*]. Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

CECILY. Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON. I cannot deny it.

CECILY. Oh!

GWENDOLEN. Is your name really John?

JACK [*standing rather proudly*]. I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY [*to GWENDOLEN*]. A gross deception has been practiced on both of us.

GWENDOLEN. My poor wounded Cecily!

CECILY. My sweet, wronged Gwendolen!

GWENDOLEN [*slowly and seriously*]. You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace. JACK and ALGERNON groan and walk up and down.*] *Ernest*

CECILY [*rather brightly*]. There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWENDOLEN. An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*slowly and hesitatingly*]. Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY [*surprised*]. No brother at all?

JACK [*cheerily*]. None!

GWENDOLEN [*severely*]. Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*pleasantly*]. Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLEN. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECILY. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWENDOLEN. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECILY. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they? [*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*]

JACK. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGERNON. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGERNON. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK. Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGERNON. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't got the remotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing, too.

ALGERNON. Your brother is a little off colour, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing, either.

JACK. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like

that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGERNON. I can see no possible defense at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGERNON. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGERNON. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK. Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGERNON. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stock-brokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins.

[*Rising.*]

JACK. [*rising*]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from ALGERNON.*]

ALGERNON. [*offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON. That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from JACK.*]

JACK. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGERNON. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGERNON. It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK [*picking up the muffin-dish*]. Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. But I hate tea-cake.

ALGERNON. Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGERNON. I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left. [*JACK groans, and sinks into a chair.*]
ALGERNON *still continues eating.*

ACT III

SCENE.—*Morning-room at the Manor House.* GWENDOLEN and CECILY are at the window, looking out into the garden.

—GWENDOLEN. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECILY. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

—GWENDOLEN. [*after a pause*]. They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

—GWENDOLEN. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECILY. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

—GWENDOLEN. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECILY. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

[*Enter JACK, followed by ALGERNON. They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera.*]

—GWENDOLEN. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECILY. A most distasteful one.

GWENDOLEN. But we will not be the first to speak.

CECILY. Certainly not.

GWENDOLEN. Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECILY. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGERNON. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECILY [*to GWENDOLEN*]. That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWENDOLEN. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECILY. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWENDOLEN. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLEN. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German scepticism. [*Moving to CECILY.*] Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECILY. I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWENDOLEN. Then you think we should forgive them?

CECILY. Yes. I mean no.

GWENDOLEN. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECILY. Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWENDOLEN. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECILY. Certainly. [GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger.*]

GWENDOLEN and CECILY [*speaking together*]. Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK and ALGERNON [*speaking together.*] Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWENDOLEN [*to JACK*]. For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK. I am.

CECILY [*to ALGERNON*]. To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGERNON. I am!

GWENDOLEN. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK. We are. [*Clasps hands with ALGERNON.*]

CECILY. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWENDOLEN [*to JACK*]. Darling!

ALGERNON [*to CECILY*]. Darling! [*They fall into each other's arms.*]

[*Enter MERRIMAN. When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*]

MERRIMAN. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK. Good heavens!

[*Enter LADY BRACKNELL. The couples separate in alarm.*]

[*Exit MERRIMAN.*]

LADY BRACKNELL. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWENDOLEN. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, Mamma.

LADY BRACKNELL. Come here. Sit down. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to JACK.*] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her

unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the impression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to deceive him. Indeed I have never deceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY BRACKNELL. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGERNON. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGERNON [*stammering*]. Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY BRACKNELL. Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGERNON [*airily*]. Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL. What did he die of?

ALGERNON. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY BRACKNELL. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGERNON. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

LADY BRACKNELL. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury, may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my

nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [LADY BRACKNELL bows coldly to CECILY.]

ALGERNON. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. I beg your pardon?

CECILY. Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down*]. I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus. [JACK looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.]

JACK [*in a clear, cold voice*]. Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N. B.

LADY BRACKNELL. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK. I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL [*grimly*]. I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY BRACKNELL. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*very irritably*]. How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and the English variety.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favour of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch.*] Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK. Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-bye, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY BRACKNELL [*sitting down again*]. A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To CECILY.*] Come over here, dear. [*CECILY goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvellous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her own husband did not know her.

JACK [*aside*]. And after six months nobody knew her.

LADY BRACKNELL. [*Glares at JACK for a few moments. Then bends, with a practised smile, to CECILY.*] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [*CECILY turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [*CECILY presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn.

They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGERNON. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY BRACKNELL. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGERNON. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY BRACKNELL. Never speak disrespectfully of society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To CECILY.*] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGERNON. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECILY [*kisses her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY BRACKNELL. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECILY. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGERNON. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECILY. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY BRACKNELL. To speak frankly, I am not in favour of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY BRACKNELL. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [ALGERNON and CECILY look at him in indignant amazement.]

LADY BRACKNELL. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

JACK. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon, during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretence of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is, that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY BRACKNELL. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY BRACKNELL [to CECILY]. Come here, sweet child. [CECILY goes over.] How old are you, dear?

CECILY. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY BRACKNELL. You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed, no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [In meditative manner.] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't

think your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY BRACKNELL. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECILY. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGERNON. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECILY. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGERNON. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECILY. I don't know, Mr. Monerieff.

LADY BRACKNELL. My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK. But my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY BRACKNELL [*rising and drawing herself up*]. You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY BRACKNELL. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear, [*GWENDOLEN rises*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

[*Enter DR. CHASUBLE.*]

CHASUBLE. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY BRACKNELL. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

CHASUBLE [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to JACK and ALGERNON*]. Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY BRACKNELL. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptised. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHASUBLE. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK. I don't think that, as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHASUBLE. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savour of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY BRACKNELL [*starting*]. Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHASUBLE. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I am on my way to join her.

LADY BRACKNELL. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital impor-

tance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHASUBLE [*somewhat indignantly*]. She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY BRACKNELL. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHASUBLE [*severely*]. I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*interposing*]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY BRACKNELL. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHASUBLE [*looking off*]. She approaches; she is nigh.

[*Enter MISS PRISM hurriedly.*]

MISS PRISM. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters. [*Catches sight of LADY BRACKNELL, who has fixed her with a stony glare. MISS PRISM grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

LADY BRACKNELL [*in a severe, judicial voice*]. Prism! [*MISS PRISM bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [*MISS PRISM approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror. ALGERNON and JACK pretend to be anxious to shield CECILY and GWENDOLEN from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [*MISS PRISM starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at MISS PRISM.*] Prism, where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

MISS PRISM. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old but capacious hand-bag in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

JACK [*who has been listening attentively*]. But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

MISS PRISM. Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

MISS PRISM. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK. What railway station?

MISS PRISM [*quite crushed*]. Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

JACK. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWENDOLEN. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit JACK in great excitement.*]

CHASUBLE. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY BRACKNELL. I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing. [*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everybody looks up.*]

CECILY. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHASUBLE. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY BRACKNELL. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments

of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHAUSABLE [*looking up*]. It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled.*]

LADY BRACKNELL. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWENDOLEN. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last. [*Enter JACK with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.*]

JACK [*rushing over to Miss PRISM*]. Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

MISS PRISM [*calmly*]. It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*in a pathetic voice*]. Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

MISS PRISM [*amazed*]. You?

JACK [*embracing her*]. Yes . . . mother!

MISS PRISM [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*]. Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

MISS PRISM [*still more indignant*]. Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to LADY BRACKNELL.*] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY BRACKNELL. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK. Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily,—how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of ALGERNON.*] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother. Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGERNON. Well, not till to-day, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

GWENDOLEN [*to JACK*]. My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWENDOLEN. I never change, except in my affections.

CECILY. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

LADY BRACKNELL. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY BRACKNELL. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*irritably*]. Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY BRACKNELL [*meditatively*]. I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But

I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit. But only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK. Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGERNON. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY BRACKNELL. The General was essentially a man of peace, except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY BRACKNELL. Yes, I remember that the general was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWENDOLEN. Ernest! My own Ernest! I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWENDOLEN. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK. My own one!

CHASUBLE [*to Miss PRISM*]. Lætitia! [*Embraces her.*]

MISS PRISM [*enthusiastically*]. Frederick! At last!

ALGERNON. Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

JACK. Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

LADY BRACKNELL. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital importance of Being Earnest.

THE GREEN GODDESS

(1921)

BY

WILLIAM ARCHER

Reprinted with permission of and by special
arrangement with
Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.,
authorized publishers.

CHARACTERS

THE RAJA OF RUKH.

WATKINS, his valet.

MAJOR ANTONY CRESPIN.

LUCILLA, his wife.

DOCTOR BASIL TRAHERNE.

LIEUTENANT DENIS CARDEW.

Priests, Villagers, Regular and Irregular Troops, Servants,
and an unseen multitude.

SCENE—A remote region at the back of the Himalayas.

THE GREEN GODDESS

ACT I

SCENE.—A region of gaunt and almost treeless mountains, uniformly grey in tone, except in so far as the atmosphere lends them colour. Clinging to the mountain wall in the background, at an apparent distance of about a mile, is a vast barbaric palace, with long stretches of unbroken masonry, crowned by arcades and turrets.

The foreground consists of a small level space between two masses of rock. In the rock on the left a cave-temple has been roughly hewn. Two thick and rudely-carved pillars divide it into three sections. Between the pillars, in the middle section, can be seen the seated figure of a six-armed Goddess, of forbidding aspect, coloured dark green. In front of the figure is a low altar with five or six newly-severed heads of goats lying at its base. The temple is decorated with untidy and mouldering wreaths and other floral offerings.

The open space between the two rock masses forms a rudely-paved forecourt to the temple. It is bordered by smaller idols and three or four round-headed stone posts, painted green.

Mountain paths wind off behind the rocks, and through the low shrubs, both to right and left.

Projecting over the rock-mass on the right can be seen the wing of an aeroplane, the nacelle and under-carriage hidden. It has evidently just made a rather disastrous forced landing.

The pilot and two passengers are in the act of extricating themselves from the wreck, and clambering down the cliff. The pilot is DR. BASIL TRAHERNE; the passengers are MAJOR ANTONY CRESPIN and his wife LUCILLA. TRAHERNE is a well set-up man, vigorous and in good training. CRESPIN, somewhat heavy and dissipated-looking, is in khaki.

LUCILLA is a tall, slight, athletic-woman, wearing a tailor-made tweed suit. All three on their first appearance wear aviation helmets and leather coats. The coats they take off as occasion offers.

Their proceedings are watched with wonder and fear by a group of dark and rudely-clad natives, rather Mongolian in feature. They chatter eagerly among themselves. A man of higher stature and more Aryan type, the PRIEST of the temple, seems to have some authority over them.

As soon as all three newcomers have descended, the PRIEST gives some directions to a young man among the bystanders, who makes off at great speed. He is a messenger to the castle.

LUCILLA [*to CRESPIN, who is at a difficult point, and about to jump*]. Take care, Antony! Let Dr. Traherne give you a hand.

TRAHERNE [*already on the ground*]. Yes.

CRESPIN. Hang it all, I'm not such a crock as all that. [*Jumps heavily, but safely.*]

TRAHERNE. Are you all right, Mrs. Crespin? Not very much shaken?

LUCILLA. Not a bit.

TRAHERNE. It was a nasty bump.

LUCILLA. You managed splendidly.

CRESPIN. Come on, Lu—sit on that ledge, and I can swing you down.

TRAHERNE. Let me—

[CRESPIN and TRAHERNE support her as she jumps lightly to the ground.]

LUCILLA. Thank you.

CRESPIN. That last ten minutes was pretty trying. I don't mind owning that my nerves are all of a twitter. [*Producing a pocket flask, and pouring some of its contents into the cup.*] Have a mouthful, Traherne?

TRAHERNE. No, thank you.

CRESPIN [*to LUCILLA*]. You won't, I know. I will. [*Drinks off the brandy, then pours and drinks again.*] That's better! —And now—where are we, Doctor?

TRAHERNE. I have no notion.

CRESPIN. Let's ask the populace.

[*The natives have been standing at some distance, awe-struck, but chattering eagerly among themselves. The PRIEST, intently watching, is silent. CRESPIN advances towards him, the natives meanwhile shrinking back in fear. The PRIEST salaams slightly and almost contemptuously. CRESPIN addresses him in Hindustani, which he evidently does not understand. He in turn pours forth a speech of some length, pointing to the temple and the palace. CRESPIN can make nothing of it. While this is proceeding:*]

TRAHERNE [*in a low voice, to LUCILLA*]. You were splendid, all through!

LUCILLA. I had perfect faith in *you*.

TRAHERNE. If I'd had another pint of petrol, I might have headed for that sort of esplanade behind the castle—

LUCILLA. Yes, I saw it.

TRAHERNE. —and made an easy landing. But I simply *had* to try for this place, and trust to luck.

LUCILLA. It wasn't luck, but your skill, that saved us.

TRAHERNE. You are very good to me.

CRESPIN [*turning*]. It's no use—he doesn't understand a word of Hindustani. You know Russian, don't you, Doctor?

TRAHERNE. A little.

CRESPIN. We must be well on towards Central Asia. Suppose you try him in Russian. Ask him where the hell we are, and who owns the shooting-box up yonder. [TRAHERNE *says something to the PRIEST in Russian.*]

THE PRIEST [*his face lighting up, points to the earth, and then makes an enveloping gesture to signify the whole country, saying:*] Rukh, Rukh, Rukh, Rukh.

CRESPIN. What the deuce is he Rooking about?

TRAHERNE. Goodness knows.

LUCILLA. I believe I know. Wait a minute. [*Feeling in her pockets*]. I thought I had the paper with me. I read in the *Leader*, just before we started, that the three men who murdered the Political Officer at Abdulabad came from a wild region at the back of the Himalayas, called Rukh.

TRAHERNE. Now that you mention it, I *have* heard of the place. [*He turns to the PRIEST and says a few more words in Russian, pointing to the palace. The PRIEST replies "Raja Sahib" several times over.*]

CRESPIN. Oh, it's Windsor Castle, is it? Well, we'd better make tracks for it. Come, Lucilla. [*The PRIEST, much excited, stops his way, pouring forth a stream of unintelligible language. TRAHERNE says something to him in Russian, whereupon he pauses and then says two or three words, slowly and with difficulty—one of them "Raja."*]

TRAHERNE. His Russian is even more limited than mine; but I gather that the Raja has been sent for and will come here.

CRESPIN [*lighting a cigarette*]. All right—then we'd better await developments. [*Seats himself on a green-painted stone. As the PRIEST sees this, he makes a rush, hustles CRESPIN off, with wild exclamations, and then, disregarding him, makes propitiatory gestures, and mutters formulas of deprecation, to the stone.*]

CRESPIN [*very angry, lays his hand on his revolver-case*]. Confound you, take care what you're doing! You'd better treat us civilly, or—

TRAHERNE [*laying a hand on his arm*]. Gently, gently, Major. This is evidently some sort of sacred enclosure, and you were sitting on one of the gods.

CRESPIN. Well damn him, he might have told me—

TRAHERNE. If he had, you wouldn't have understood. The fellow seems to be the priest—you see, he's begging the god's pardon.

CRESPIN. If I knew his confounded lingo, I'd jolly well make him beg mine.

TRAHERNE. We'd better be careful not to tread on their corns. We have Mrs. Crespin to think of.

CRESPIN. Damn it, sir, do you think I don't know how to take care of my own wife?

TRAHERNE. I think you're a little hasty, Major—that's all. These are evidently queer people, and we're dependent on them to get us out of our hobble.

LUCILLA [*down, right*]. Do you think I could sit on this stone without giving offense to the deities?

TRAHERNE. Oh, yes, that seems safe enough. [*After LUCILLA is seated.*] I don't know how to apologize for having got you into this mess.

LUCILLA. Don't talk nonsense, Dr. Traherne. Who can foresee a Himalayan fog?

TRAHERNE. The only thing to do was to get above it, and then, of course, my bearings were gone.

LUCILLA. Now that we're safe, I should think it all great fun if it weren't for the children.

CRISPIN. Oh, they don't expect us for a week, and surely it won't take us more than that to get back to civilization.

TRAHERNE. Or, at all events, to a telegraph line.

LUCILLA. I suppose there's no chance of flying back?

TRAHERNE. Not the slightest, I'm afraid. I fancy the old bus is done for.

LUCILLA. Oh, Dr. Traherne, what a shame! And you'd only had it a few weeks!

TRAHERNE. What does it matter so long as *you* are safe?

LUCILLA. What does it matter so long as we're *all* safe?

CRISPIN. That's not what Traherne said. Why pretend to be blind to his—chivalry?

TRAHERNE [*trying to laugh it off*]. Of course I'm glad you're all right, Major, and I'm not sorry to be in a whole skin myself. But ladies first, you know.

CRISPIN. The perfect knight errant, in fact!

TRAHERNE. Decidedly "errant." I couldn't well have gone more completely astray.

LUCILLA. Won't you look at the machine and see if it's quite hopeless?

TRAHERNE. Yes, at once. [*He goes towards the wreck of the aeroplane and passes out of sight. The populace clustered in and around the temple on the left are intent upon the marvel of the aeroplane, but the PRIEST fixes his gaze upon CRISPIN and LUCILLA.*]

CRISPIN [*sits beside LUCILLA on the stone*]. Well, Lucilla!

LUCILLA. Well?

CRESPIN. That was a narrow squeak.

LUCILLA. Yes, I suppose so.

CRESPIN. All's well that ends well, eh?

LUCILLA. Of course.

CRESPIN. You don't seem very grateful to Providence.

LUCILLA. For sending the fog?

CRESPIN. For getting us down safely—all three.

LUCILLA. It was Dr. Traherne's nerve that did that. If he hadn't kept his head—

CRESPIN. We should have crashed. One or other of us would probably have broken his neck; and if Providence had played up, it might have been the right one.

LUCILLA. What do you mean?

CRESPIN. It might have been me. Then you'd have thanked God, right enough!

LUCILLA. Why *will* you talk like this, Antony? If I hadn't sent Dr. Traherne away just now, you'd have been saying these things in his hearing.

CRESPIN. Well, why not? He's quite one of the family? Don't tell me he doesn't know all about the "state of our relations," as they say in the divorce court.

LUCILLA. If he does, it's not from me. No doubt he knows what the whole station knows.

CRESPIN. And what does the whole station know? Why, that your deadly coldness drives me to drink. I've lived for three years in an infernal clammy fog like that we passed through. Who's to blame if I take a whiskey-peg now and then, to keep the chill out?

LUCILLA. Oh, Antony, why go over it all again? You know very well it was drink—and other things—that came between us; not my coldness, as you call it, that drove you to drink.

CRESPIN. Oh, you good women! You patter after the parson "Forgive us as we forgive those that trespass against us." But you don't know what forgiveness means.

LUCILLA. What's the use of it, Antony? Forgive? I have "forgiven" you. I don't try to take the children from you, though it might be better for them if I did. But to forgive is one thing, to forget another. When a woman has seen a

man behave as you have behaved, do you think it is possible for her to forget it, and to love him afresh? There are women in novels, and perhaps in the slums, who have such short memories; but I am not one of them.

CRESPIN. No, by God, you're not! So a man's whole life is to be ruined—

LUCILLA. Do you think yours is the only life to be ruined?

CRESPIN. Ah, there we have it! I've not only offended your sensibilities; I am in your way. You love this other man, this model of all the virtues!

LUCILLA. You have no right to say that.

CRESPIN [*disregarding her protest*]. He's a paragon. He's a wonder. He's a mighty microbe-killer before the Lord; he's going to work Heaven knows what miracles, only he hasn't brought them off yet. And you're cursing the mistake you made in marrying a poor devil of a soldier-man instead of a first-class scientific genius. Come! Make a clean breast of it! You may as well!

LUCILLA. I have nothing to answer. While I continue to live with you, I owe you an account of my actions—but not of my thoughts.

CRESPIN. Your actions? Oh, I know very well you're too cold—too damned respectable—to kick over the traces. And then you have the children to think of.

LUCILLA. Yes; I have the children.

CRESPIN. Besides, there's no hurry. If you only have patience for a year or two, I'll do the right thing for once, and drink myself to death.

LUCILLA. You have only to keep yourself a little in hand to live to what they call "a good old age."

CRESPIN. 'Pon my soul, I've a mind to try to, though goodness knows my life is not worth living. I was a fool to come on this crazy expedition—

LUCILLA. Why, it was you yourself that jumped at Dr. Traherne's proposal.

CRESPIN. I thought we'd get to the kiddies a week earlier. *They'd* be glad to see me, poor little things. *They* don't despise their daddy.

LUCILLA. It shan't be my fault, Antony, if they ever do. But you don't make it easy to keep up appearances.

CRESPIN. Oh, Lu, Lu, if you would treat me like a human being—if you would help me and make life tolerable for me, instead of a thing that won't bear looking at except through the haze of drink—we might retrieve the early days. God knows I never cared two pins for any woman but you—

LUCILLA. No, the others, I suppose, only helped you, like whiskey, to see the world through a haze. *I saw the world through a haze when I married you; but you have dispelled it once for all. Don't force me to tell you how impossible it is for me to be your wife again. I am the mother of your children—that gives you a terrible hold over me. Be content with that.*

TRAHERNE. [*Still unseen, calls:*] Oh, Mrs. Crespin! [*He appears, clambering down from the aeroplane.*] I've found in the wreck the newspaper you spoke of—you were right about Rukh.

CRESPIN [*as TRAHERNE comes forward*]. What does it say?

TRAHERNE [*reads*]. "Abdulabad, Tuesday. Sentence of death has been passed on the three men found guilty of the murder of Mr. Haredale. It appears that these miscreants are natives of Rukh, a small and little-known independent state among the northern spurs of the Himalayas."

LUCILLA. Yes, that's what I read.

TRAHERNE. This news isn't the best possible passport for us in our present situation.

LUCILLA. But if we're hundreds of miles from anywhere, it can't be known here yet.

CRESPIN [*lighting a cigarette*]. In any case, they wouldn't dare to molest us.

TRAHERNE. All the same it might be safest to burn this paragraph in case there's anybody here that can read it. [*He tears a strip out of the paper, lights it at CRESPIN's match, watches it burn till he has to drop the flaming remnant of it, upon which he stamps. LUCILLA takes the rest of the small local paper and lays it beside her leather coat on the stone, left. The PRIEST intently watches all these proceedings.*]

[Meanwhile strange ululations, mingled with the throb of tom-toms and the clash of cymbals, have made themselves faintly heard from the direction of the mountain path, left.]

CRESPIN. Hallo! What's this?

TRAHERNE. Sounds like the march of the Great Panjan-drum.

[The sounds rapidly approach. The natives all run to the point where the path debouches on the open space. They prostrate themselves, some on each side of the way. A wild procession comes down the mountain path. It is headed by a gigantic negro flourishing two naked sabres, and gyrating in a barbaric war-dance. Then come half a dozen musicians with tom-toms and cymbals. Then a litter carried by four bearers. Through its gauze curtains the figure of the RAJA can be indistinctly seen. Immediately behind the litter comes WATKINS, an English valet, demure and correct, looking as if he had just strolled in from St. James Street. The procession closes with a number of the RAJA's bodyguard, in the most fantastic, parti-coloured attire, and armed with antique match-locks, some of them with barrels six or seven feet long. The RAJA's litter is set down in front of the temple. WATKINS opens the curtains and gives his arm to the RAJA as he alights. The RAJA makes a step towards the European party in silence. He is a tall, well-built man of forty, dressed in the extreme of Eastern gorgeousness. CRESPIN advances and salutes.]

CRESPIN. Does Your Highness speak English?

RAJA. Oh, yes, a little. [As a matter of fact he speaks it irreproachably.]

CRESPIN [pulling himself together and speaking like a soldier and a man of breeding]. Then I have to apologize for our landing uninvited in your territory.

RAJA. Uninvited, but, I assure you, not unwelcome.

CRESPIN. We are given to understand that this is the State of Rukh.

RAJA. The kingdom of Rukh, Major—if I rightly read the symbols on your cuff.

CRESPIN [*again salutes*]. Major Crespin. Permit me to introduce my wife—

RAJA [*with a profound salaam*]. I am delighted, Madam, to welcome you to my secluded dominions. You are the first lady of your nation I have had the honour of receiving.

LUCILLA. Your Highness is very kind.

CRESPIN. And this is Dr. Basil Traherne, whose aeroplane—or what is left of it—you see.

RAJA. Doctor Traherne? *The* Doctor Traherne, whose name I have so often seen in the newspapers? “The Pasteur of Malaria.”

TRAHERNE. The newspapers make too much of my work. It is very incomplete.

RAJA. But you are an aviator as well?

TRAHERNE. Only as an amateur.

RAJA. I presume it is some misadventure—a most fortunate misadventure for me—that has carried you so far into the wilds of the Himalayas?

TRAHERNE. Yes—we got lost in the clouds. Major and Mrs. Crespin were coming up from the plains to see their children at a hill station—

RAJA. Pahari no doubt?

TRAHERNE. Yes, Pahari—and I was rash enough to suggest that I might save them three days’ travelling by taking them up in my aeroplane.

RAJA. Madam is a sportswoman, then?

LUCILLA. Oh, I have been up many times.

CRESPIN [*with a tinge of sarcasm*]. Yes, many times.

LUCILLA. It was no fault of Dr. Traherne’s that we went astray. The weather was impossible.

RAJA. Well, you have made a sensation here, I can assure you. My people have never seen an aeroplane. They are not sure—simple souls—whether you are gods or demons. But the fact of your having descended in the precincts of a temple of our local goddess—[*with a wave of his hand towards*

the idol] allow me to introduce you to her—is considered highly significant.

CRESPIN. I hope, sir, that we shall find no difficulty in obtaining transport back to civ—to India.

RAJA. To civilization, you were going to say? Why hesitate, my dear sir? We know very well that we are barbarians. We are quite reconciled to the fact. We have had some five thousand years to accustom ourselves to it. This sword [*Touching his scimitar.*] is a barbarous weapon compared with your revolver; but it was worn by my ancestors when yours were daubing themselves blue and picking up a precarious livelihood in the woods. [*Breaking off hastily to prevent any reply.*] But Madam is standing all this time! Watkins, what are you thinking of? Some cushions. [*WATKINS piles some cushions from the litter so as to form a seat for LUCILLA. Meanwhile the RAJA continues.*] Another litter for Madam, and mountain-chairs for the gentlemen, will be here in a few minutes. Then I hope you will accept the hospitality of my poor house.

LUCILLA. We are giving a great deal of trouble, Your Highness.

RAJA. A great deal of pleasure, Madam.

CRESPIN. But I hope, sir, there will be no difficulty about transport back to—India.

RAJA. Time enough to talk of that, Major, when you have rested and recuperated after your adventure. You will do me the honour of dining with me this evening? I trust you will not find us altogether uncivilized.

LUCILLA [*lightly*]. Your Highness will have to excuse the barbarism of our attire. We have nothing to wear but what we stand up in.

RAJA. Oh, I think we can put that all right. Watkins!

WATKINS [*advancing*]. Your 'Ighness!

RAJA. You are in the confidence of our Mistress of the Robes. How does our wardrobe stand?

WATKINS. A fresh consignment of Paris models come in only last week, Your 'Ighness.

RAJA. Good! Then I hope, Madam, that you may find among them some rag that you will deign to wear.

LUCILLA. Paris models, Your Highness! And you talk of being uncivilized!

RAJA. We do what we can, Madam. I sometimes have the pleasure of entertaining European ladies—though not hitherto, Englishwomen—in my solitudes; and I like to mitigate the terrors of exile for them. Then as for civilization, you know, I have always at my elbow one of its most finished products. Watkins!

WATKINS [*stepping forward*]. Your 'Ighness!

RAJA. You will recognize in Watkins, gentlemen, another representative of the Ruling Race. [WATKINS, *with down-cast eyes, touches his hat to* CRESPIAN and TRAHERNE.] I assure you he rules me with an iron hand—not always in a velvet glove. Eh, Watkins?

WATKINS. Your 'Ighness will 'ave your joke.

RAJA. He is my Prime Minister and all my Cabinet—but more particularly my Lord Chamberlain. No one can touch him at mixing a cocktail or making a salad. My entire household trembles at his nod; even my *chef* quails before him. Nothing comes amiss to him; for he is, like myself, a man without prejudices. You may be surprised at my praising him to his face in this fashion; you may foresee some danger of—what shall I say?—swelled head. But I know my Watkins; there is not the slightest risk of his outgrowing that modest bowler. He knows his value to me, and he knows that he would never be equally appreciated elsewhere. I have guarantees for his fidelity—eh, Watkins?

WATKINS. I know when I'm well off, if that's what Your 'Ighness means.

RAJA. I mean a little more than that—but no matter. I have sometimes thought of instituting a peerage, in order that I might raise Watkins to it. But I mustn't let my admiration for British institutions carry me too far.—Those scoundrels of bearers are taking a long time, Watkins.

WATKINS. The lady's litter 'ad to 'ave fresh curtains, Your 'Ighness. They won't be a minute, now.

RAJA. You were speaking of transport, Major—is your machine past repair, Dr. Traherne?

TRAHERNE. Utterly, I'm afraid.

RAJA. Let us look at it. [*Turns and finds that his bodyguard are all clustered on the path, looking at it. He gives a sharp word of command. They scamper into a sort of loose order, up left.*] Ah, yes—propeller smashed—planes crumpled up—

TRAHERNE. Under-carriage wrecked—

RAJA. I'm afraid we can't offer to repair the damage for you.

TRAHERNE. I'm afraid not, sir.

RAJA. A wonderful machine! Yes, Europe has something to boast of. I wonder what the Priest here thinks of it. [*He says a few words to the PRIEST, who salaams, and replies volubly at some length.*] He says it is the great roc—the giant bird, you know, of our Eastern stories. And he declares that he plainly saw his Goddess hovering over you as you descended, and guiding you towards her temple.

TRAHERNE. I wish she could have guided us towards the level ground I saw behind your castle. I could have made a safe landing there.

RAJA. No doubt—on my parade ground—almost the only level spot in my dominions.

LUCILLA. These, I suppose, are your bodyguard?

RAJA. My household troops, Madam.

LUCILLA. How picturesque they are!

RAJA. Oh, a relic of barbarism, I know. I can quite understand the contempt with which my friend the Major is at this moment regarding them.

CRISPIN. Irregular troops, Raja. Often first-class fighting men.

RAJA. And you think that, if irregularity is the virtue of irregular troops, these—what is the expression, Watkins?

WATKINS. Tyke the cyke, Your 'Ighness?

RAJA. That's it—take the cake—that is what you are thinking?

CRISPIN. Well, they would be hard to beat, sir.

RAJA. I repeat—a relic of barbarism. You see, I have strong conservative instincts—I cling to the fashions of my fathers—and my people would be restive if I didn't. I maintain these fellows, as his Majesty the King-Emperor keeps up the Beefeaters in the Tower. But I also like to move with the times, as perhaps you will allow me to show you. [*He blows two short blasts on a silver whistle hanging round his neck. Instantly from behind every rock and shrub—from every bit of cover—there emerges a soldier, in spick-and-span European uniform (Russian in style), armed with the latest brand of magazine rifles. They stand like statues at attention.*]

CRESPIN. Good Lord!

TRAHERNE. Hallo!

RAJA [*to LUCILLA, who makes no move*]. I trust I did not startle you, Madam?

LUCILLA. Oh, not at all. I'm not nervous.

RAJA. You of course realize that this effect is not original. I have plagiarized it from the excellent Walter Scott:

“These are Clan-Alpine's warriors true,
And, Saxon, I am Roderick Dhu!”

But I think you'll admit, Major, that my men know how to take cover.

CRESPIN. By the Lord, sir, they must move like cats—for you can't have planted them there before we arrived.

RAJA. No, you had given me no notice of your coming.

LUCILLA. Perhaps the Goddess did.

RAJA. Not she, Madam. She keeps her own counsel. These men followed me down from the palace and have taken up position while we have been speaking. [*The RAJA gives a word of command, and the men rapidly assemble and form in two ranks, an officer on their flank.*]

CRESPIN. A very smart body of men, Raja. Allow me to congratulate you on their training.

RAJA. I am greatly flattered, Major. I superintend it myself.—Ah, here comes the litter. [*Down the path comes a*

litter borne, like the RAJA'S, by four men. It is followed by two mountain-chairs carried by two men apiece.] Permit me, Madam, to hand you to your palanquin. [*He offers LUCILLA his hand. As she rises she picks up her leather coat, and the newspaper falls to the ground. The RAJA notices it.*] Forgive me, Madam. [*Picks up the paper and looks at it.*] A newspaper, only two days old! This is such a rarity you must allow me to glance at it. [*He opens the paper and sees that a strip has been torn out from the back page.*] Ah! the telegraphic news gone! What a pity! In my seclusion, I hunger for tidings from the civilized world. [*The PRIEST comes forward and speaks to him eagerly, suggesting in pantomime TRAHERNE'S action in burning the paper, and pointing to the ashes on the ground, at which the RAJA looks.*] You burned this column?

TRAHERNE. Unfortunately, I did.

RAJA. Ah! [*Pause.*] I know your motive, Dr. Traherne, and I appreciate it. You destroyed it out of consideration for my feelings, wishing to spare me a painful piece of intelligence. That was very thoughtful—but quite unnecessary. I already know what you tried to conceal.

CRESPIN. You know—!

TRAHERNE. Your Highness knows—!

[*Simultaneously.*]

RAJA. I know that three of my subjects, accused of a political crime, have been sentenced to death.

TRAHERNE. How is it possible—?

RAJA. Bad news flies fast, Dr. Traherne. But one thing you can perhaps tell me—is there any chance of their sentences being remitted?

TRAHERNE. I am afraid not, your Highness.

CRESPIN. Remitted? I should rather say not. It was a cold-blooded, unprovoked murder.

RAJA. Unprovoked, you think? Well, I won't argue the point. And the execution is to be—?

TRAHERNE. I think tomorrow—or the day after.

RAJA. To-morrow or the day after—yes. [*Turning to LUCILLA.*] Forgive me, Madam—I have kept you waiting.

TRAHERNE. Does Your Highness know anything of these men?

RAJA [*over his shoulder, as he hands LUCILLA into the litter*]. Know them? Oh, yes—they are my brothers. [*He seats himself on his own litter and claps his hands twice. Both litters are raised and move off, LUCILLA's first. The regular soldiers line the way, in single rank. They salute as the litters pass. WATKINS follows the RAJA's. CRESPIN and TRAHERNE seat themselves in their chairs. As they do so.*]

CRESPIN. His brothers? What did he mean?

TRAHERNE [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Heaven knows!

CRESPIN. I don't half like our host, Traherne. There's too much of the cat about him.

TRAHERNE. Or of the tiger. And how the devil had he got the news?

[*As the two chairs move off, CRESPIN first, the two ranks of soldiers close round them. The irregulars and musicians, headed by the dancing negro, bring up the rear. The PRIEST prostrates himself, as if in thanksgiving, before the Goddess.*]

ACT II

SCENE.—A spacious and well-proportioned room, opening at the back upon a wide loggia. Beyond the loggia can be seen distant snow-peaks and a strip of sky. Late afternoon light.

The room is furnished in a once splendid but now very old-fashioned and faded style. Furniture of black picked out with gold, and upholstered in yellow damask. A great crystal chandelier in the middle of the ceiling, and under it a circular ottoman. Left, a large two-leaved door; right, a handsome marble fireplace, with a mirror over it. Candlesticks with crystal pendants at each end of the mantelpiece, and in the middle a bronze statuette, some eighteen inches high, representing the many-armed Goddess. A wood fire laid, but unlighted. Near the fireplace, two quite modern saddle-bag arm-chairs, out of keeping with the stiffness of the remaining furniture. A small table near the door, left, with modern

English and French books on it. A handsome gramophone in the corner, left. On the walls, left and right, some very bad paintings of fine-looking Orientals in gorgeous attire. Electric lights.

TRAHERNE discovered at back, centre, looking out over the landscape. He does not go out upon the loggia (which can be entered both right and left without passing through the room) because two turbanned servants are there, under the direction of an old and dignified Major-domo, arranging a luxurious dinner table, with four covers. TRAHERNE stands motionless for a moment. Then CRESPIN enters by the door, right, ushered in by a servant, who salaams and retires.]

CRESPIN. Ah, there you are, Doctor.

TRAHERNE [*turning*]. Hullo! How did you get on?

CRESPIN. All right. Had a capital tub. And you?

TRAHERNE. Feeling more like a human being. And what about Mrs. Crespin? I hope she's all right.

CRESPIN. She was taken off by an ayah as soon as we got in—presumably to the women's quarters.

TRAHERNE. And you let her go off alone?

CRESPIN. What the hell could I do? I couldn't thrust myself into the women's quarters.

TRAHERNE. You could have kept her with you.

CRESPIN. Do you think she'd have stayed? And, come to that, what business is it of yours?

TRAHERNE. It's any man's business to be concerned for a woman's safety.

CRESPIN. Well, well—all right. But there was nothing I could have done or that she would let me do. And I don't think there's any danger.

TRAHERNE. Let us hope not.

CRESPIN. It's a vast shanty this.

TRAHERNE. It's a palace and a fortress in one.

CRESPIN. A devilish strong place before the days of big guns. But a couple of howitzers would soon make it look pretty foolish.

TRAHERNE. No doubt; but how would you get them here?

CRESPIN [*looking at the dinner table*]. I say—it looks as

if our friend were going to do us well. [*One of the servants comes in with a wine-cooler. When the man has gone, CRESPIN picks up the bottle and looks at the label.*] Perrier Jouet, nineteen-o-six, by the lord! [*He strolls over to the ottoman, and seats himself, facing the fire-place.*] It's a rum start this, Traherne. I suppose you intellectual chaps would call it romantic.

TRAHERNE [*examining the figure of the Goddess on the mantelpiece*]. More romantic than agreeable, I should say. I don't like the looks of this lady.

CRESPIN. What is she?

TRAHERNE. The same figure we saw in the little temple, where we landed.

CRESPIN. How many arms has she got?

TRAHERNE. Six.

CRESPIN. She could give you a jolly good hug, anyway.

TRAHERNE. You wouldn't want another.

CRESPIN. Where do you suppose we really are, Traherne?

TRAHERNE. On the map, you mean?

CRESPIN. Of course.

TRAHERNE. Oh, in the never-never land. Somewhere on the way to Bokhara. I've been searching my memory for all I ever heard about Rukh. I fancy very little is known, except that it seems to send forth a peculiarly poisonous breed of fanatics.

CRESPIN. Like those who did poor Haredale in?

TRAHERNE. Precisely.

CRESPIN. D'you think our host was serious when he said they were his brothers? Or was he only pulling our leg, curse his impudence?

TRAHERNE. He probably meant caste-brothers, or simply men of the same race. But, even so, it's awkward.

CRESPIN. I don't see what these beggars, living at the back of the north wind, have got to do with Indian politics. We've never interfered with them.

TRAHERNE. Oh, it's a case of Asia for the Asians. Ever since the Japanese beat the Russians, the whole continent has been itching to kick us out.

CRESPIN. So that they may cut each other's throats at leisure, eh?

TRAHERNE. We Westerners never cut each other's throats, do we?

[WATKINS has entered at the back, right, carrying a silver centre-piece for the table. He sets it down and is going out to the left, when CRESPIN catches sight of him and hails him.]

CRESPIN. Hallo! You there! What's your name! [WATKINS stops.] Just come here a minute, will you?

WATKINS. Meaning me, sir? [*He advances into the room. There is a touch of covert insolence in his manner.*]

CRESPIN. Yes, you, Mr.—? Mr.—?

WATKINS. Watkins is my name, sir.

CRESPIN. Right ho! Watkins. Can you tell us where we are, Watkins?

WATKINS. They calls the place Rukh, sir.

CRESPIN. Yes, yes, we know that. But where is Rukh?

WATKINS. I hunderstand these mountains is called the 'Imalayas, sir.

CRESPIN. Damn it, sir, we don't want a lesson in geography!

WATKINS. No, sir? My mistake, sir.

TRAHERNE. Major Crespin means that we want to know how far we are from the nearest point in India.

WATKINS. I really couldn't say, sir. Not so very far, I dessay, as the crow flies.

TRAHERNE. Unfortunately we're not in a position to fly with the crow. How long does the journey take?

WATKINS. They tell me it takes about three weeks to Cashmere.

CRESPIN. They tell you! Surely you must remember how long it took *you*?

WATKINS. No, sir, excuse me, sir—I've never been in India.

CRESPIN. Not been in India? And I was just thinking, as I looked at you, that I seemed to have seen you before.

WATKINS. Not in India, sir. We might 'ave met in England, but I don't call to mind having that pleasure.

CRESPIN. But if you haven't been in India, how the hell did you get here?

WATKINS. I came with 'Is 'Ighness, sir, by way of Tashkent. All our dealin's with Europe is by way of Russia.

TRAHERNE. But it's possible to get to India direct, and not by way of Central Asia?

WATKINS. Oh, yes, it's done, sir. But I'm told there are some very tight places to negotiate—like the camel and the needle's eye, as you might say.

TRAHERNE. Difficult travelling for a lady, eh?

WATKINS. Next door to himpossible, I should guess, sir.

CRESPIN. A nice look-out, Traherne! [*To WATKINS.*] Tell me, my man—is His Highness—h'm—married?

WATKINS. Oh, yessir—very much so, sir.

CRESPIN. Children?

WATKINS. He has fifteen sons, sir.

CRESPIN. The daughters don't count, eh?

WATKINS. I've never 'ad a hopportunity of counting 'em, sir.

TRAHERNE. He said the men accused of assassinating a political officer were his brothers—

WATKINS [*quickly*]. Did 'e say that, sir?

TRAHERNE. Didn't you hear him? What did he mean?

WATKINS. I'm sure I couldn't say, sir. 'Is 'Ighness is what you'd call a very playful gentleman, sir.

TRAHERNE. But I don't see the joke in saying that.

WATKINS. No, sir? P'raps 'Is 'Ighness'll explain, sir.

[*A pause.*]

CRESPIN. Your master spoke of visits from European ladies—do *they* come from Russia?

WATKINS. From various parts, I understand, sir,—mostly from Paris.

CRESPIN. Any here now?

WATKINS. I really couldn't say, sir.

TRAHERNE. They don't dine with His Highness?

WATKINS. Oh, no, sir. 'Is 'Ighness sometimes sups with *them*.

CRESPIN. And my wife—Mrs. Crespin—?

WATKINS. Make your mind easy, sir—the lady won't meet any hundesirable characters, sir. I give strict orders to the—the female what took charge of the lady.

TRAHERNE. She is to be trusted?

WATKINS. Habsolutely, sir. She is—in a manner of speakin',—my wife, sir.

CRESPIN. Mrs. Watkins, eh?

WATKINS. Yessir—I suppose you would say so.

TRAHERNE. But now look here, Watkins—you say we're three weeks away from Cashmere—yet the Raja knew of the sentence passed on these subjects of his who were tried only three days ago. How do you account for that?

WATKINS. I can't, sir. All I can say is, there's queer things goes on here.

TRAHERNE. Queer things? What do you mean?

WATKINS. Well, sir, them priests you know—they goes in a lot for what 'Is 'Ighness calls magic—

TRAHERNE. Oh, come, Watkins—you don't *believe* in that!

WATKINS. Well, sir, p'raps not. I don't, not to say *believe* in it. But there's queer things goes on. I can't say no more, nor I can't say no less. If you'll excuse me, sir, I must just run my eye over the dinner-table. 'Is 'Ighness will be here directly.

[*He retires, inspects the table, makes one or two changes, and presently goes out by the back, right.*]

CRESPIN. That fellow's either a cunning rascal or a damned fool. Which do you think?

TRAHERNE. I don't believe he's the fool he'd like us to take him for.—Ah, here is Mrs. Crespin.

[*Enter LUCILLA, left, ushered in by a handsome AYAH. She is dressed in a gauzy gown of quite recent style, dark blue or crimson. Not in the least décolleté. At most the sleeves might be open, so as to show her arms to the elbow. No ornaments except a gold locket on a little gold chain round her neck. The costume is absolutely plain, but in striking contrast to her travelling dress. Her hair is beautifully arranged.*]

LUCILLA [*to the AYAH*]. Thank you. [*The AYAH disappears. LUCILLA advances, holding out her skirt a little.*] Behold the Paris model!

CRESPIN. My eye, Lu, what a ripping frock!

TRAHERNE. Talk of magic, Major! There's something in what our friend says.

LUCILLA. What is that? What about magic?

CRESPIN. We'll tell you afterwards. Let's have *your* adventures first.

LUCILLA. No adventures precisely—only a little excursion into the Arabian Nights.

TRAHERNE. Do tell us!

LUCILLA [*evidently a little nervous, yet not without enjoyment of the experience*]. Well, my guide—the woman you saw—led me along corridor after corridor, and upstairs and downstairs, till we came to a heavy bronze door where two villainous-looking blacks, with crooked swords, were on guard. I didn't like the looks of them a bit; but I was in for it and had to go on. They drew their swords and flourished a sort of salute, grinning with all their teeth. Then the ayah clapped her hands twice, some one inspected us through a grating in the door, and the ayah said a word or two—

TRAHERNE. No doubt "Open sesame!"

LUCILLA. The door was opened by a hideous, hump-backed old woman, just like the wicked fairy in a pantomime. She didn't actually bite me, but she looked as if she'd like to—and we passed on. More corridors, with curtained doorways, where I had a feeling that furtive eyes were watching me—though I can't positively say I saw them. But I'm sure I heard whisperings and titterings—

CRESPIN. Good Lord! If I'd thought they were going to treat you like that, I'd have—

LUCILLA. Oh, there was nothing you could have done; and, you see, no harm came of it. At last the woman led me into a large sort of wardrobe room, lighted from above, and almost entirely lined with glazed presses full of frocks. Then she slid back a panel, and there was a marble-lined bath-room!—a deep pool, with a trickle of water flowing into it from a

dolphin's head of gold—just enough to make the surface ripple and dance. And all around were the latest Bond Street luxuries—shampooing bowls and brushes, bottles of essences, towels on hot rails and all the rest of it. The only thing that was disagreeable was a sickly odour from some burning pastilles—oh, and a coal-black bath-woman.

TRAHERNE. It suggests a Royal Academy picture—"The Odalisque's Pool."

CRESPIN. Or a soap advertisement.

TRAHERNE. Same thing.

LUCILLA. Well, I wasn't sorry to play the odalisque for once; and when I had finished, lo and behold! the ayah had laid out for me half a dozen gorgeous and distinctly risky dinner-gowns. I had to explain to her in gestures that I couldn't live up to any of them, and would rather put on my old travelling dress. She seemed quite frightened at the idea—

CRESPIN. Ha ha! She'd probably have got the sack—perhaps literally—if she'd let you do that.

LUCILLA. Anyway, she at last produced this comparatively inoffensive frock. She did my hair, and wanted to finish me off with all sorts of necklaces and bangles, but I stuck to my old locket with the babies' heads.

CRESPIN. Well, all's well that ends well, I suppose. But if I'd foreseen all this "Secrets of the Zenana" business, I'm dashed if I wouldn't—

LUCILLA [*cutting him short*]. What were you saying about magic when I came in?

TRAHERNE. Only that this man, Watkins—he's the husband of your ayah, by the way—says queer things go on here, and pretends to believe in magic.

LUCILLA. Do you know, Antony, when the Raja was speaking about him down there, it seemed to me that his face was somehow familiar to me.

CRESPIN. There, Doctor! What did I say? I knew I'd seen him before, but I'm damned if I can place him.

LUCILLA. I wish I could get a good look at him.

[WATKINS enters, back, left, with something for the table.]

TRAHERNE. There he is. Shall I call him in?

LUCILLA. Say I want him to thank his wife from me.

TRAHERNE [*calls*]. Watkins.

WATKINS. Sir?

TRAHERNE. Mrs. Crespin would like to speak to you.
[*WATKINS comes forward.*]

LUCILLA. I hear, Watkins, that the ayah who so kindly attended to me is your wife.

WATKINS. That's right, ma'am.

LUCILLA. She gave me most efficient assistance, and, as she seems to know no English, I couldn't thank her. Will you be good enough to tell her how much I appreciated all she did for me?

WATKINS. Thank you kindly, ma'am. She'll be proud to hear it. [*Pause.*] Is that all, ma'am?

LUCILLA. That's all, thank you, Watkins.

[*He returns to the loggia, but goes to the other side of the dinner-table and keeps an eye on the three.*]

CRESPIN. You've a good memory for faces, Lu. Do you spot him?

LUCILLA. Don't let him see we're talking about him. I believe I do know him, but I'm not quite sure. Do you remember, the first year we were in India, there was a man of the Dorsets that used often to be on guard outside the mess-room?

CRESPIN. By God, you've hit it!

TRAHERNE. Take care! He's watching.

LUCILLA. You remember he deserted, and was suspected of having murdered a woman in the bazaar.

CRESPIN. I believe it's the very man.

LUCILLA. It's certainly very like him.

CRESPIN. And he swears he's never been in India!

TRAHERNE. Under the circumstances, he naturally would.

LUCILLA. At all events, he's not a man to be trusted.

[*At this moment the RAJA enters by the door, left. He is in faultless European evening dress—white waist-coat, white tie, etc. No jewels, except the ribbon and*

star of a Russian order. Nothing oriental about him except his turban and his complexion.]

RAJA [*as he enters*]. Pray forgive me, Madam, for being the last to appear. The fact is, I had to hold a sort of Cabinet Council—or shall I say a conclave of prelates?—with regard to questions arising out of your most welcome arrival.

CRISPIN. May we hope, Raja, that you were laying a clawk for our return.

RAJA. Pray, pray, Major, let us postpone that question for the moment. First let us fortify ourselves; after dinner we will talk seriously. If you are in *too* great a hurry to desert me, must I not conclude, Madam, that you are dissatisfied with your reception?

LUCILLA. How could we possibly be so ungrateful, your Highness? Your hospitality overwhelms us.

RAJA. I trust my Mistress of the Robes furnished you with all you required?

LUCILLA. With all and more than all. She offered me quite a bewildering array of gorgeous apparel.

RAJA. Oh, I am glad. I had hoped that perhaps your choice might have fallen on something more—[*He indicates by gestures, “décolleté.”*] But no—I was wrong—Madam's taste is irreproachable.

[*A servant enters from behind with cocktails on a silver salver. LUCILLA refuses. The men accept.*

LUCILLA *picks up a yellow French book on one of the tables.*]

RAJA. You see, Madam, we fall behind the age here. We are still in the Anatole France period. If he bores you, here [*picking up another book*] is a Maurice Barrès that you may find more amusing.

LUCILLA. Oh, I too am in the Anatole France period, I assure you. [*Reads.*] “*Sur la Pierre Blanche*”—isn't that the one you were recommending to me, Dr. Traherne?

TRAHERNE. Yes, I like it better than some of his later books.

RAJA [*picking up a silver-grey book*]. As for Bernard

Shaw, I suppose he's quite a back number; but I confess his impudence entertains me. What do you say, Major?

CRESPIN. Never read a line of the fellow—except in *John Bull*.

LUCILLA and TRAHERNE [*simultaneously*]. In *John Bull*!

CRESPIN. Somebody told me he wrote in *John Bull*—doesn't he?

RAJA. Are you fond of music, Mrs. Crespin? [*Goes to the gramophone, and turns over some records, till he finds one which he lays on the top of the pile.*] Suppose we have some during dinner. [*WATKINS enters from the back, left.*] Watkins, just start this top record, will you? [*WATKINS does so.*]

[*At this moment the MAJOR-DOMO enters from the back, and says a few words.*]

RAJA. Ah! *Madame est servie!* Allow me—

[*He offers LUCILLA his arm and leads her to the table. The others follow.*] Will you take this seat, Madam? You here, Major—Dr. Traherne! [*He himself sits to the left of the table; LUCILLA on his left; TRAHERNE opposite him; and CRESPIN opposite LUCILLA, with his back to the sunset, which is now flooding the scene.*]

RAJA [*as the servants offer dishes*]. I can recommend this caviare, Major—and you'll take a glass of maraschino with it—Russian fashion.

[*Just as they sit down the gramophone reels out the first bars of a piece of music.*]

LUCILLA [*after listening a moment*]. Oh, what is that?

RAJA. Don't you know it?

LUCILLA. Oh, yes, but I can't think what it is.

RAJA. Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette"—a most humorous composition. May I pour you a glass of maraschino? [*He goes on talking as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

When it rises again, the glow has faded, and some big stars are pulsing in the strip of purple sky. The party is just finishing dinner. Dessert is on the table, which is lighted by elec-

tric lamps. WATKINS stands behind the RAJA's chair. The MAJOR-DOMO and other servants hover round.

The RAJA has just finished a story, at which all laugh. A short pause.]

LUCILLA. What a heavenly night!

RAJA. Yes, our summer climate is far from bad.

LUCILLA. The air is like champagne.

RAJA. A little over frappé for some tastes. What do you say, Madam? Shall we have coffee indoors? There is an edge to the air at these altitudes, as soon as the sun has gone down.

LUCILLA [*shivers slightly*]. Yes, I do feel a little chilly.

RAJA. Watkins, send for a shawl for Madam. [*Rising.*] And ah—let us have the fire lighted. [*WATKINS goes off to the left. The RAJA says a word to the MAJOR-DOMO, who touches a switch in one of the pillars of the loggia opening. The chandelier and wall-lamps of the salon burst into brilliant light.*]

RAJA [*offering his arm to LUCILLA*]. Let me find you a comfortable seat, Madam. [*He leads her to the two arm-chairs further back.*] When the fire is lighted, I think you will find this quite pleasant. Take the other chair, Major. [*CRESPIN does so.*] I must really refurnish this salon. My ancestors had no notion of comfort. To tell the truth, I use the room only on state occasions, like the present. [*Bowing to LUCILLA.*] I have a much more modern snuggerly upstairs, which I hope you will see to-morrow.

[*Servants hand round coffee, liqueurs, cigars, cigarettes during what follows. One of them lights the fire, of aromatic wood.*]

RAJA [*to TRAHERNE, who has remained at the loggia opening, looking out into the night*]. Star-gazing, Dr. Traherne?

TRAHERNE. I beg your pardon. [*Comes forward.*]

LUCILLA. Dr. Traherne is quite an astronomer.

RAJA. As much at home with the telescope as with the microscope, eh?

TRAHERNE. Oh, no. I'm no astronomer. I can pick out a few of the constellations,—that's all.

RAJA. For my part, I look at the stars as little as possible. As a spectacle they're monotonous, and they don't bear thinking of.

[*The AYAH, entering by door, left, brings LUCILLA a shawl, which the RAJA places on her shoulders.*]

LUCILLA. What an exquisite shawl!

RAJA. And most becoming—don't you think so, Doctor? [TRAHERNE *is gazing at LUCILLA.*] My Mistress of the Robes has chosen well! [*He makes a motion of noiseless applause to the AYAH, who grins and exits, left.*]

LUCILLA. Why won't the stars bear thinking of, Raja?

RAJA. Well, dear lady, don't you think they're rather ostentatious? *I* was guilty of a little showing-off today, when I played that foolish trick with my regular troops. But think of the Maharaja up yonder [*pointing upwards*] who night after night whistles up his glittering legions, and puts them through their deadly punctual drill, as much as to say "See what a devil of a fellow *I* am!" Do you think it quite in good taste, Madam?

TRAHERNE [*laughing*]. I'm afraid you're jealous, Raja. You don't like having to play second fiddle to a still more absolute ruler.

RAJA. Perhaps you're right, Doctor—perhaps it's partly that. But there's something more to it. I can't help resenting—[*To CRESPIAN to whom a servant is offering liqueurs.*] Let me recommend the kümmel, Major. I think you'll find it excellent.

TRAHERNE. What is it you resent?

RAJA. Oh, the respect paid to mere size—to the immensity, as they call it, of the universe. Are we to worship a god because he's big?

TRAHERNE. If you resent his bigness, what do you say to his littleness? The microscope, you know, reveals him no less than the telescope.

RAJA. And reveals him in the form of death-dealing specks of matter, which you, I understand, Doctor, are impiously proposing to exterminate.

TRAHERNE. I am trying to marshal the life-saving against the death-dealing powers.

RAJA. To marshal God's right hand against his left, eh? or *vice versa*? But I admit you have the pull of the astronomers, in so far as you deal in life, not in dead mechanism. [*Killing a gnat on the back of his hand.*] This mosquito that I have just killed—I am glad to see you smoke, Madam: it helps to keep them off—this mosquito, or any smallest thing that has life in it, is to me far more admirable than a whole lifeless universe. What do *you* say, Major?

CRESPIN [*smoking a cigar*]. I say, Raja, that if you'll tell that fellow to give me another glass of kummel, I'll let you have your own way about the universe. [*The RAJA says a word to one of the servants, who refills CRESPIN's glass.*]

LUCILLA. But what if the mechanism, as you call it, isn't dead? What if the stars are swarming with life?

TRAHERNE. Yes—suppose there are planets, which of course we can't see, circling round each of the great suns we *do* see? And suppose they are all inhabited?

RAJA. I'd rather not suppose it. Isn't one inhabited world bad enough? Do we want it multiplied by millions?

LUCILLA. Haven't you just been telling us that a living gnat is more wonderful than a dead universe?

RAJA. Wonderful? Yes, by all means—wonderful as a device for torturing and being tortured. Oh, I'm neither a saint nor an ascetic—I take life as I find it—I am tortured and I torture. But there's one thing I'm really proud of—I'm proud to belong to the race of the Buddha, who first found out that life was a colossal blunder.

LUCILLA [*in a low voice*]. Should you like the sky to be starless? That seems to me—forgive me, Prince—the last word of impiety.

RAJA. Possibly, Madam. How my esteemed fellow-creatures were ever bluffed into piety is a mystery to me. Not that I'm complaining. If men could not be bluffed by the Raja above, much less would they be bluffed by us Rajas below. And though life is a contemptible business, I don't deny that *power* is the best part of it.

TRAHERNE. In short, your Highness is a Superman.

RAJA. Ah, you read Nietzsche? Yes, if I weren't of the kindred of the Buddha, I should like to be of the race of that great man.

[*The servants have now all withdrawn.*]

LUCILLA [*looking out*]. There is the moon rising over the snowfields. I hope you wouldn't banish *her* from the heavens?

RAJA. Oh, no—I like her silly, good-natured face. And she's useful to lovers and brigands and other lawless vagabonds, with whom I have great sympathy. Besides, I don't know that she's so silly either. She seems to be for ever raising her eyebrows in mild astonishment at human folly.

CRISPIN. All this is out of my depth, your Highness. We've had a rather fatiguing day. Mightn't we—?

RAJA. To be sure. I only waited till the servants had gone. Now, are you all quite comfortable?

LUCILLA. Quite.

TRAHERNE. Perfectly, thank you.

CRISPIN. Perfectly.

RAJA [*smoking a cigar, and standing with his back to the fire*]. Then we'll go into committee upon your position here.

CRISPIN. If you please, sir.

RAJA. I'm afraid you may find it rather disagreeable.

CRISPIN. Communications bad, eh? We have a difficult journey before us?

RAJA. A long journey, I fear—yet not precisely difficult.

CRISPIN. It surely can't be so very far, since you had heard of the sentence passed on those assassins.

RAJA. I am glad, Major, that you have so tactfully spared me the pain of re-opening that subject. We should have had to come to it, sooner or later. [*An embarrassing pause.*]

TRAHERNE. When your Highness said they were your brothers, you were of course speaking figuratively. You meant your tribesmen?

RAJA. Not at all. They are sons of my father—not of my mother.

LUCILLA. And we intrude upon you at such a time! How dreadful!

RAJA. Oh, pray don't apologize. Believe me, your arrival has given great satisfaction.

TRAHERNE. How do you mean?

RAJA. I'll explain presently. But first—

CRESPIN [*interrupting*]. First let us understand each other. You surely can't approve of this abominable crime?

RAJA. My brothers are fanatics, and there is no fanaticism in me.

LUCILLA. How do they come to be so different from you?

RAJA. That is just what I was going to tell you. I was my father's eldest son, by his favourite wife. Through my mother's influence (my poor mother—how I loved her!) I was sent to Europe. My education was wholly European. I shed all my prejudices. I became the open-minded citizen of the world whom I hope you recognize in me. My brothers, on the other hand, turned to India for their culture. The religion of our people has always been a primitive idolatry. My brothers naturally fell in with adherents of the same superstition, and they worked each other up to a high pitch of frenzy against the European exploitation of Asia.

TRAHERNE. Had you no restraining influence upon them?

RAJA. Of course I might have imprisoned them—or had them strangled—the traditional form of argument in our family. But why should I? As I said, I have no prejudices—least of all in favour of the British raj. We are of Indian race, though long severed from the Motherland—and I do not love her tyrants.

CRESPIN [*who has had quite enough to drink*]. In short, sir, you defend this devilish murder?

RAJA. Oh, no—I think it foolish and futile. But there is a romantic as well as a practical side to my nature, and, from the romantic point of view, I rather admire it.

CRESPIN [*rising*]. Then, sir, the less we intrude on your hospitality the better. If you will be good enough to furnish us with transport tomorrow morning—

RAJA. That is just where the difficulty arises—

CRESPIN. No transport, hey?

RAJA. Materially it might be managed; but morally I fear it is—excuse the colloquialism, Madam—no go.

CRESPIN. What the devil do you mean, sir—?

LUCILLA [*trying to cover his bluster*]. Will your Highness be good enough to explain?

RAJA. I mentioned that the religion of my people is a primitive superstition? Well, since the news has spread that three Feringhis have dropped from the skies precisely at the time when three princes of the royal house are threatened with death at the hands of the Feringhi government,—and dropped, moreover, in the precincts of a temple—my subjects have got into their heads that you have been personally conducted hither by the Goddess whom they especially worship.

LUCILLA. The Goddess—?

RAJA [*turning to the statuette*]. Here is her portrait on the mantelpiece—much admired by connoisseurs.

[*LUCILLA cannot repress a shudder.*]

RAJA. I need not say that I am far from sharing the popular illusion. Your arrival is of course the merest coincidence—for me, a charming coincidence. But my people hold unphilosophic views. I understand that even in England the vulgar are apt to see the Finger of Providence in particularly fortunate—or unfortunate—occurrences.

CRESPIN. Then the upshot of all this palaver is that you propose to hold us as hostages, to exchange for your brothers?

RAJA. That is not precisely the idea, my dear sir. My theologians do not hold that an exchange is what the Goddess decrees. Nor, to be quite frank, would it altogether suit my book.

LUCILLA. Not to get your brothers back again?

RAJA. You may have noted in history, Madam, that family affection is seldom the strong point of Princes. Is it not Pope who remarks on their lack of enthusiasm for “a brother near the throne”? My sons are mere children, and were I to die—we are all mortal—there might be trouble

about the succession. In our family, uncles seldom love nephews.

LUCILLA. So you would raise no finger to save your brothers?

RAJA. That is not my only reason. Supposing it possible that I could bully the Government of India into giving up my relatives, do you think it would sit calmly down under the humiliation? No, no, dear lady. It might wait a few years to find some decent pretext, but assuredly we should have a punitive expedition. It would cost thousands of lives and millions of money, but what would that matter? Prestige would be restored, and I should end my days in a maisonette in Petrograd. It wouldn't suit me at all. Hitherto I have escaped the notice of your Government by a policy of masterly inactivity, and I propose to adhere to that policy.

CRISPIN. Then I don't see how—

TRAHERNE [*simultaneously*]. Surely you don't mean—?

RAJA. We are approaching the crux of the matter—a point which I fear you may have some difficulty in appreciating. I would beg you to remember, that, though I am what is commonly called an autocrat, there is no such thing under the sun as real despotism. All government is government by consent of the people. It is very stupid of them to consent—but they do. I have studied the question—I took a pretty good degree at Cambridge, in Moral and Political Science—and I assure you that, though I have absolute power of life and death over my subjects, it is only their acquiescence that gives me that power. If I defied their prejudices or their passions, they could upset my throne tomorrow.

CRISPIN [*angrily*]. Will you be so kind as to come to the point, sir?

RAJA. Gently, Major! We shall reach it soon enough.

[*To LUCILLA*]. Please remember, too, Madam, that an autocracy is generally a theocracy to boot, and mine is a case in point. I am a slave to theology. The clerical party can do what it pleases with me, for there is no other party to oppose it. True, I am my own Archbishop of Canterbury—but “I have a partner: Mr. Jorkins”—I have a terribly ex-

acting Archbishop of York. I fear I may have to introduce you to him tomorrow.

LUCILLA. You are torturing us, your Highness. Like my husband, I beg you to come to the point.

RAJA. The point is, dear lady, that the theology on which, as I say, my whole power is founded, has not yet emerged from the Mosaic stage of development: it demands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth—

[*A long pause.*]

a life for a life.

[*Another pause.*]

TRAHERNE. You mean to say—

RAJA. Unfortunately, I do.

LUCILLA. You would kill us—?

RAJA. Not I, Madam—the clerical party. And only if my brothers are executed. If not, I will merely demand your word of honour that what has passed between us shall never be mentioned to any human soul—and you shall go free.

CRESPIN. But if your brother assassins are hanged—as assuredly they will be—you will put to death in cold blood—

RAJA [*interrupting*]. Oh, not in cold blood, Major. There is nothing cold-blooded about the clerical party when “white goats,” as their phrase goes, are to be sacrificed to the God-dess.

TRAHERNE. Does your Goddess demand the life of a woman?

RAJA. Well, on that point she might not be too exacting. “On trouve avec le Ciel des accommodements.” If Madam would be so gracious as to favour me with her—society—

[*LUCILLA after gazing at him for a moment speechless, realizes his meaning and springs up with a cry of rage and shame.*]

TRAHERNE. Scoundrel!

CRESPIN [*draws his revolver*]. Another word, and I shoot you like a dog!

RAJA. Oh, no, Major—that wouldn't help a bit. You would only be torn to pieces instead of beheaded. Besides,

I have had your teeth drawn. That precaution was taken while you were at your bath.

CRESPIN [*examines his revolver and finds it empty*]. Damnation!

LUCILLA [*raising her head and addressing both men*]. Promise you won't leave me alone! If we must die, let me die first.

RAJA. The order of the ceremony, Madam, will not be at these gentlemen's choice. [LUCILLA *makes a gesture of despair*.] But do not be alarmed. No constraint shall be put upon your inclinations. Dr. Traherne reproached me with lack of consideration for your sex, and I hinted that, if you so pleased, your sex should meet with every consideration. I gather that you do *not* so please? Well, I scarcely hoped you would—I do not press the point. None the less, the suggestion remains open. And now, I'm afraid I've been talking a great deal. You must be fatigued.

[*The MAJOR-DOMO appears at the door, left, with a slip of paper on a salver. The RAJA motions him to advance, goes to meet him, takes the paper and looks at it.*]

RAJA. Ah, this is interesting! If you will wait a few minutes, I may have some news for you. Excuse me.

[*Exit left, followed by the MAJOR-DOMO.*]

[*The three stare at each other for a moment in speechless horror.*]

LUCILLA. And we were saved this morning—only for this!

TRAHERNE. Courage! There must be some way out.

CRESPIN. The whole thing's a damned piece of bluff! Ha, ha, ha! The scoundrel almost took me in.

LUCILLA [*throwing herself down on the ottoman in a passion of tears*]. My babies! Oh, my babies! Never to see them again! To leave them all alone in the world! My Ronny! My little Iris! What can we do? What can we do? Antony! Dr. Traherne! Think of something—something—

CRESPIN. Yes, yes, Lu—we'll think of something—

TRAHERNE. There's that fellow Watkins—we might bribe him—

LUCILLA. Oh, offer him every penny we have in the world—

TRAHERNE. I'm afraid he's a malicious scoundrel. He must have known what was hanging over our heads, and, looking back, I seem to see him gloating over it.

LUCILLA. Still—still—perhaps he can be bought. Antony! Think of the children! Oh, do let us try.

CRESPIN. But even if he would, he couldn't guide us through the mountains.

LUCILLA. Oh, he could hire some one else.

TRAHERNE. I don't believe we can possibly be so far from the frontier as he makes out.

LUCILLA. How far did he say?

TRAHERNE. Three weeks' journey. Yet they know all about things that happened less than a week ago.

[Suddenly all the lights in the room go down very perceptibly. All look round in surprise.]

LUCILLA. What is that? *[A sort of hissing and chittering sound is heard faintly but unmistakably.]* What an odd sound!

TRAHERNE. Major! Do you hear that!

CRESPIN. Do I hear it? I should say so!

TRAHERNE. Wireless!

CRESPIN *[much excited]*. Wireless, by Jupiter! They're sending out a message!

TRAHERNE. That accounts for it! They're in wireless communication with India!

LUCILLA *[to TRAHERNE]*. Antony knows all about wireless.

CRESPIN. I should rather think so! Wasn't it my job all through the war! If I could hear more distinctly now—and if they're transmitting in clear—I could read their message.

TRAHERNE. That may be our salvation!

CRESPIN. If we could get control of the wireless for five minutes, and call up the aerodrome at Amil-Serai—

LUCILLA. What then?

CRESPIN. Why, we'd soon bring the Raja to his senses.

LUCILLA *[to CRESPIN]*. Where do you suppose the installation is?

CRESPIN. Somewhere overhead I should say.

TRAHERNE. We must go very cautiously, Major. We must on no account let the Raja suspect that we know anything about wireless telegraphy, else he'd take care we should never get near the installation.

CRESPIN. Right you are, Traherne—I'll lie very low.

LUCILLA [*tearing off the shawl*]. And how are we to behave to that horrible man?

CRESPIN. We must keep a stiff upper lip, and play the game.

LUCILLA. You mean pretend to take part in his ghastly comedy of hospitality and politeness?

TRAHERNE. If you can, it would be wisest. His delight in showing off his European polish is all in our favour. But for that he might separate us and lock us up. We must avoid that at all costs.

LUCILLA. Oh, yes, yes—

CRESPIN. You've always had plenty of pluck, Lu—. Now's the time to show it.

LUCILLA [*putting on the shawl again*]. You can trust me. The thought of the children knocked me over at first; but I'm not afraid to die. [*The chattering sound ceases, and the lights suddenly go up again.*] The noise has stopped.

CRESPIN. Yes, they've left off transmitting, and ceased to draw on the electric current.

TRAHERNE. He'll be back presently. Don't let us seem to be consulting.

[TRAHERNE *seats himself in an easy chair*. LUCILLA *sits on the ottoman*. CRESPIN *lights a cigar and takes the RAJA'S place before the fire.*]

CRESPIN. Curse it! I can't remember the wave-length and the call for Amil-Serai. I was constantly using it at one time.

TRAHERNE. It'll come back to you.

CRESPIN. I pray to the Lord it may!

[*The RAJA enters, left.*]

RAJA. I promised you news, and it has come.

CRESPIN. What news?

RAJA. My brothers' execution is fixed for the day after tomorrow.

LUCILLA. Then the day after to-morrow—?

RAJA. Yes—at sunset. [*A pause.*] But meanwhile I hope you will regard my poor house as your own. This is Liberty Hall. My tennis courts, my billiard-room, my library are all at your disposal. I should not advise you to pass the palace gates—it would not be safe, for popular feeling, I must warn you, runs very high. Besides, where could you go? There are three hundred miles of almost impassable country between you and the nearest British post.

TRAHERNE. In that case, Prince, how do you communicate with India? How has this news reached you?

RAJA. Does that puzzle you?

TRAHERNE. Naturally.

RAJA. You don't guess?

TRAHERNE. We have been trying to. The only thing we could think of was that you must be in wireless communication.

RAJA. You observed nothing to confirm the idea?

TRAHERNE. Why no.

RAJA. Did you not notice that the lights suddenly went down?

TRAHERNE. Yes, and at the same time we heard a peculiar hissing sound.

RAJA. None of you knew what it meant?

TRAHERNE. No.

RAJA. Then you have no knowledge of wireless telegraphy?

TRAHERNE. None.

RAJA. I may tell you, then, that that hissing is the sound of wireless transmission. I *am* in communication with India.

TRAHERNE [*to the others*]. You see, I was right.

CRESPIN. You have a wireless expert here then?

RAJA. Watkins,—that invaluable fellow—he is my operator.

TRAHERNE. And with whom do you communicate?

RAJA. Do you think that quite a fair question, Doctor? Does it show your usual tact? I have my agents—I can say no more. [*Pause.*] Shall I ring for the ayah, Madam, to see you to your room?

LUCILLA. If you please. [*As he has his finger on the bell, she says*] No; stay a moment. [*Rises and advances towards him.*] Prince, I have two children. If it weren't for them, don't imagine that any of us would beg a favour at your hands. But for their sakes won't you instruct your agent to communicate with Simla and try to bring about an exchange—your brothers' lives for ours?

RAJA. I am sorry, Madam, but I have already told you why that is impossible. Even if your Government agreed, it would assuredly take revenge on me for having extorted such a concession. No whisper of your presence here must ever reach India, or—again forgive the vulgarism—my goose is cooked.

LUCILLA. The thought of my children does not move you?

RAJA. My brothers have children—does the thought of them move the Government of India? No, Madam, I am desolated to have to refuse you, but you must not ask for the impossible. [*He presses the bell.*]

LUCILLA. Does it not strike you that, if you drive us to desperation, we may find means of cheating your Goddess? What is to prevent me, for instance, from throwing myself from that loggia?

RAJA. Nothing, dear lady, except that clinging to the known, and shrinking from the unknown, that all of us feel, even while we despise it. Besides, it would be foolishly precipitate, in every sense of the word. While there is life there is hope. You can't read my mind. For aught you can tell, I may have no intention of proceeding to extremities, and may only be playing a little joke upon you. I hope you have observed that I have a sense of humour. [*The AYAH enters.*] Ah, here is the ayah. Good night, Madam; sleep well. [*Bows her to the door. Exit LUCILLA with AYAH.*] Gentlemen, a whiskey and soda. No? Then good night, good night. [*Exeunt CRESPIN and TRAHERNE.*]

[*The RAJA takes from the table a powerful electric torch, and switches it on. Then he switches off the lights of the room, which is totally dark except for the now*

moonlit background. He goes up to the idol on the mantelpiece, throws the light of the torch upon it, and makes it an ironic salaam. Then he lights himself towards the door, right.]

ACT III

SCENE.—*The RAJA'S Snuggery. An entirely European and modern room; its comfort contrasting with the old-fashioned, comfortless splendour of the scene of Act II.*

A door in front, right, opens on the billiard-room; another, a little further back, leads to the rest of the palace. A large and solid folding door in the back wall, centre. To the left, a large open window with a shallow balcony, which has the effect of being at a great height, and commands a view across the valley to the snow-peaks beyond.

On the left, near the window, a handsome pedestal writing table, with a large and heavy swivel chair behind it. Silver fittings on the table, all in perfect order. Close to the nearer end of the writing table, a revolving bookcase, containing the Encyclopedia Britannica and other books of reference. On the top of it a tantalus with a syphon and glasses. Close up to the writing table, and about of equal length, a deeply upholstered green leather sofa. Further over towards the left, a small table with smoking appliances. On each side of the table a comfortable green leather arm-chair. No small chairs. Low bookcases, filled with serious-looking modern books, against the walls, wherever there is space for them. On the top of one of the bookcases a large bronze bust of Napoleon. A black and white portrait of Nietzsche on the wall, along with some sporting prints.

[CRESPIN discovered alone, wandering around the room, nervous and irritable. He tries the door at back; it is locked. Opens the door down right, and closes it, muttering "Billiards, begad!" Crosses to the writing table, examines the articles upon it, and picks up a paper which proves to be "La Vie Parisienne." He throws it down with the comment, "French muck!" Notices a paper on

the couch, picks it up and says with disgust, "Russian." Then he comes down to the revolving bookcase, glances at the books and spins it angrily. After a moment's hesitation, he pours some whiskey into a tumbler and fills it from the syphon. Is on the point of drinking, but hesitates, then says, "No!" Goes to the balcony and throws out the contents of the glass. As he is setting the glass down, TRAHERNE enters, second door right, ushered in by a SOLDIER, who salutes and exits.]

CRESPIN. There! You think you've caught me!

TRAHERNE. Caught you?

CRESPIN. Lushing. But I haven't been. I threw the stuff out of the window. For Lucilla's sake, I must keep all my wits about me.

TRAHERNE. Yes, if we can all do that, we may pull through yet.

CRESPIN. Did you sleep?

TRAHERNE. Not a wink. And you?

CRESPIN. Dozed and woke again fifteen times in a minute. A hellish night.

TRAHERNE. Have you news of Mrs. Crespin?

CRESPIN. She sent me this chit. [*Hands him a scrap of paper.*]

TRAHERNE [*reads*]. "Have slept and am feeling better. Keep the flag flying." What pluck she has!

CRESPIN. Yes, she's game—always was.

TRAHERNE. She reminds me of the women in the French Revolution. We might all be in the Conciergerie, waiting to hear the tumbrils.

CRESPIN. It would be more endurable if we *were* in prison. It's this appearance of freedom—the scoundrel's damned airs of politeness and hospitality—that makes the thing such a nightmare. [*Mechanically mixing himself a whiskey and soda.*] Do you believe we're really awake, Traherne? If I were alone, I'd think the whole thing *was* a blasted nightmare; but Lucilla and you seem to be dreaming it too. [*Raising the glass to his lips, he remembers and puts it down again, saying:*] Damn!

TRAHERNE. Some day we may look back upon it as on a bad dream.

CRESPIN. He does you well, curse him! They served me a most dainty *chota hazri* this morning, and with it a glass of rare old *fine champagne*.

TRAHERNE [*pointing to the door, down left*]. Where does that door lead?

CRESPIN. To a billiard-room. Billiards! Ha, ha!

TRAHERNE [*at door, centre*]. And this one?

CRESPIN. I don't know. It's locked—and a very solid door, too.

TRAHERNE. Do you know what I think?

CRESPIN. Yes, and I agree with you.

TRAHERNE. Opening off the fellow's own sanctum—

CRESPIN. It's probably the wireless room. [*They exchange significant glances.*]

TRAHERNE [*indicating the window*]. And what's out here?

CRESPIN. Take a look.

TRAHERNE [*looking over*]. A sheer drop of a hundred feet.

CRESPIN. And a dry torrent below. How if we were to pick up our host, Traherne, and gently drop him on those razor-edged rocks?

TRAHERNE [*shrugs his shoulders*]. As he said last night, they'd only tear us to pieces the quicker.

CRESPIN. If it weren't for Lucilla, I'm damned if I wouldn't do it all the same.

[*The RAJA enters, second door left, dressed in spick-and-span up-to-date riding attire. He crosses to the writing table.*]

RAJA. Good morning, Major; good morning, Doctor. How do you like my snuggery? I hope you have slept well? [*They make no answer.*] No? Ah, perhaps you find this altitude trying? Never mind. We have methods of dealing with insomnia.

CRESPIN. Come now, Raja, a joke's a joke, but this cat-and-mouse business gets on one's nerves. Make arrangements to send us back to the nearest British outpost, and we'll give

you our Bible oath to say nothing about the—pleasantry you've played on us.

RAJA. Send you back, my dear Major? I assure you, if I were ever so willing, it would be as much as my place is worth. You don't know how my faithful subjects are looking forward to tomorrow's ceremony. If I tried to cancel it, there would be a revolution. You must be reasonable, my dear sir.

CRESPIN. Do you think we would truckle to you, damn you, if it weren't for my wife's sake? But for her we'll make any concession—promise you anything.

RAJA. What can you promise that is worth a brass farthing to me? [*With sudden ferocity.*] No. Asia has a long score against you swaggering, blustering, whey-faced lords of creation, and, by all the gods, I mean to see some of it paid tomorrow! [*Resuming his suave manner.*] But in the meantime there is no reason why we shouldn't behave like civilized beings. How would you like to pass the morning? I'm sorry I can't offer you any shooting. I mustn't lead you into temptation. What do you say to billiards? It soothes the nerves. [*Opening the door.*] Here is the billiard-room. I have a little business to attend to, but I'll join you presently.

CRESPIN. Of all the infernal purring devils—!

RAJA. Dignity, Major, dignity!

[TRAHERNE *interposes and shepherds the MAJOR off. The click of billiard-balls is presently heard. The RAJA seats himself at the writing table and presses a bell. Then he takes up a pad of paper and pencil, and taps his teeth, cogitating what to write. In a few moments WATKINS enters.*]

WATKINS. Your 'Ighness rang?

RAJA. Come in, Watkins. Just close the billiard-room door, will you? [WATKINS *looks into the billiard-room and then closes the door.*]

WATKINS. They're good pluck'd uns, sir; I will say that.

RAJA. Yes, there's some satisfaction in handling them. I'm glad they're not abject—it would quite spoil the sport.

WATKINS. Quite so, sir.

RAJA. But it has occurred to me, Watkins, that perhaps it's not quite safe to have them so near the wireless room. Their one chance would be to get into communication with India. They appeared last night to know nothing about the wireless, but I have my doubts. Tell me, Watkins—have they made any attempt to bribe you?

WATKINS. Not yet, sir.

RAJA. Ha, that looks bad. It looks as if they had something else up their sleeves, and were leaving bribery to the last resort. I want to test their ignorance of wireless. I want you, in their presence, to send out some message that is bound to startle or enrage them, and see if they show any sign of understanding it.

WATKINS [*grinning*]. That's a notion, sir.

RAJA. But I can't think of a message.

[*The AYAH opens the second door, right, ushers in LUCILLA, and exits. LUCILLA has resumed her travelling dress. The RAJA has been examining the lock of the wireless room, and is thus partly concealed by the entrance door as it opens, so that LUCILLA is well into the room before she observes him. He comes forward.*]

RAJA. Ah, Mrs. Crespin, I was just thinking of you. Think of angels and you hear their wings. Won't you sit down?

LUCILLA [*ignoring his invitation*]. I thought my husband was here.

RAJA. He's not far off. [*To WATKINS, pointing to the centre door.*] Just wait in there for a few minutes; I may have instructions for you.

[*WATKINS produces a key-ring, selects a key, unlocks the door of the wireless-room, and goes in, closing the door behind him.*]

RAJA [*to LUCILLA, who has stood motionless*]. Do, pray, sit down. I want so much to have a chat with you. [*LUCILLA seats herself, in silence.*] I hope you had everything you required?

LUCILLA. Everything.

RAJA. The ayah?

LUCILLA. Was most attentive.

RAJA. And you slept—?

LUCILLA. More or less.

RAJA. More rather than less, if one may judge by your looks.

LUCILLA. Does it matter?

RAJA. What can matter more than the looks of a beautiful woman?

LUCILLA [*listening*]. What's that?

RAJA. The click of billiard-balls. Your husband and Dr. Traherne are passing the time.

LUCILLA [*rising*]. If you'll excuse me, I'll join them.

RAJA. Oh, pray spare me a few moments. I want to speak to you seriously.

LUCILLA [*sitting down again*]. Well—I am listening.

RAJA. You are very curt, Mrs. Crespin. I'm afraid you bear me malice,—you hold me responsible for the doubtless trying situation in which you find yourself.

LUCILLA. Who else is responsible?

RAJA. Who? Why chance, fate, the gods, Providence—whoever, or whatever, pulls the strings of this unaccountable puppet-show. Did *I* bring you here? Did *I* conjure up the fog? Could *I* have prevented your dropping from the skies? And when once you had set foot in the Goddess's precinct, it was utterly out of my power to save you—at any rate the men of your party. If I raised a finger to thwart the Goddess, it would be the end of my rule—perhaps of my life.

LUCILLA. You know that is not true. You could easily smuggle us away, and then face the people out. What about your troops?

RAJA. A handful, dear lady—a toy army. It amuses me to play at soldiers. They could do nothing against priests and people, even if they were to be depended upon. And they, too, worship the Goddess.

LUCILLA. What you really mean, Raja, is that you dare not risk it—you haven't the courage.

RAJA. You take a mean advantage, Madam. You abuse the privilege of your sex in order to taunt me with cowardice.

LUCILLA. Let us say, then, that you haven't the *will* to save us.

RAJA. Reflect one moment, Madam—why *should* I have the will, at the risk of all I possess, to save Major Crespín and Dr. Traherne? Major Crespín is your husband—does *that* recommend him to me? Forgive me if I venture to guess that it doesn't greatly recommend him to *you*. He is an only too typical specimen of a breed I detest: pigheaded, bull-necked, blustering, overbearing. Dr. Traherne is an agreeable man enough—I daresay a man of genius—

LUCILLA. If you kill him—if you cut short his work—you kill millions of your own race, whom he would have saved.

RAJA. I don't know that I care very much about the millions you speak of. Life is a weed that grows again as fast as death mows it down. At all events, he is an Englishman, a Feringhi—and, may I add, without indiscretion, that the interest you take in him—oh, the merest friendly interest, I am sure—does not endear him to me. One is, after all, a man, and the favour shown to another man by a beautiful woman—*[LUCILLA rises and moves toward the billiard-room. The RAJA interposes.]* Please, please, Mrs. Crespín, bear with me if I transgress your Western conventions. Can I help being an Oriental? Believe me, I mean no harm; I wanted to talk to you about—

LUCILLA. Well?

RAJA. You spoke last night of—your children. *[LUCILLA turns away, her self-control wavering.]* I think you said—a boy and a little girl.

LUCILLA *[throws herself down on the couch in a fit of weeping]*. My babies, my babies!

RAJA. I feel for you, Mrs. Crespín, I do indeed. I would do anything—

LUCILLA *[looking up, vehemently]*. Prince, if I write them a letter of farewell, will you give me your word of honour that it shall reach them?

RAJA. Ah, there, Madam, you must pardon me! I have already said that the last thing I desire is to attract the attention of the Government of India.

LUCILLA. I will say nothing to show where I am, or what has befallen me. You shall read it yourself.

RAJA. An ingenious idea! You would have it come fluttering down out of the blue upon your children's heads, like a message from a Mahatma. But, the strength of my position, you see, is that no one will ever know what has become of you. You will simply disappear in the uncharted sea of the Himalayas, as a ship sinks with all hands in the ocean. If I permitted any word from you to reach India, the detective instinct, so deeply implanted in your race, would be awakened, and the Himalayas would be combed out with a tooth-comb. No, Madam, I cannot risk it.

LUCILLA [*her calm recovered*]. Cannot? You dare not! But you can and dare kill defenceless men and women. Raja, you are a pitiful coward.

RAJA. Forgive me if I smile at your tactics. You want to goad me into chivalry. If every man were a coward who took life without risking his own, where would your British sportsmen be?

LUCILLA. I beg your pardon—a savage is not necessarily a coward. And now let me go to my husband.

RAJA. Not yet, Mrs. Crespin—one more word. You are a brave woman, and I sincerely admire you—

LUCILLA. Please—please—

RAJA. Listen to me. It will be worth your while. I could not undertake to send a letter to your children—but it would be very easy for me to have them carried off and brought to you here.

LUCILLA [*starts, and faces him*]. What do you mean?

RAJA. I mean that, in less than a month, you may have your children in your arms, uninjured, unsuspecting, happy—if—

LUCILLA. If?

RAJA. If—oh, in your own time, of your own free will—you will accept the homage it would be my privilege to offer you.

LUCILLA. That!

RAJA. You have the courage to die, dear lady—why not

have the courage to live? [*Pause.*] You believe, I daresay, that tomorrow, when the ordeal is over, you will awaken in a new life, and that there your children will rejoin you. Suppose it were so: suppose that in forty—fifty—sixty years, they passed over to you: would they be your children? Can God Himself give you back their childhood? What I offer you is a new life, not problematical, but assured; a new life, without passing through the shadow of death; a future utterly cut off from the past, except that your children will be with you, not as vague shades, but living and loving. They must be quite young; they would soon forget all that had gone before. They would grow to manhood and womanhood under your eyes; and ultimately, perhaps, when the whole story was forgotten, you might, if you wished it, return with them to what you call civilization.

And meanwhile, you are only on the threshold of the best years of your life. You would pass them, not as a memsahib in a paltry Indian cantonment, but as the absolute queen of an absolute king. I do not talk to you of romantic love. I respect you too much to think you accessible to silly sentiment. But that is just it: I respect as much as I admire you; and I have never pretended to respect any other woman. Therefore I say you should be my first and only Queen. Your son, if you gave me one, should be the prince of princes; my other sons should all bow down to him and serve him. For, though I hate the arrogance of Europe, I believe that from a blending of the flower of the East with the flower of the West, the man of the future—the Superman—may be born.

[*LUCILLA has sat motionless through all this speech, her elbows on the end of the couch, twisting her handkerchief in her hands and gazing straight in front of her. There is now a perceptible pause before she speaks in a toneless voice.*]

LUCILLA. Is that all? Have you quite done?

RAJA. I beg you to answer.

LUCILLA. I can't answer the greater part of what you have been saying, for I have not heard it; at least I have not un-

derstood it. All I have heard is "In less than a month you may have your children in your arms," and then again, "Can God Himself give you back their childhood?" These words have kept hammering at my brain till—[*Showing her handkerchief.*] you see—I have bit my lip to keep from shrieking aloud. I think the devil must have put them in your mouth—

RAJA. Pooh! You don't believe in these old bugbears.

LUCILLA. Perhaps not. But there is such a thing as diabolical temptation, and you have stumbled upon the secret of it.

RAJA. Stumbled!

LUCILLA. Mastered the art of it, if you like—but not in your long harangue. All I can think of is, "Can God Himself give you back their childhood?" and "In a month you may have them in your arms."

RAJA [*eagerly*]. Yes, yes—think of that. In three or four weeks you may have your little ones—

LUCILLA [*rising and interrupting him vehemently*]. Yes—but on what conditions? That I should desert my husband and my friend—should let them go alone to their death—should cower in some back room of this murderous house of yours, listening to the ticking of the clock, and thinking, "Now—now—the stroke has fallen"—stopping my ears so as not to hear the yells of your bloodthirsty savages—and yet, perhaps, hearing nothing else to my dying day. No, Prince!—you said something about not passing through the shadow of death; but if I did this I should not pass through it, but live in it, and bring my children into it as well. What would be the good of having them in my arms if I could not look them in the face? [*She passes to the billiard-room door.*]

RAJA. That is your answer?

LUCILLA. The only possible answer. [*She enters the billiard-room and closes the door.*]

RAJA [*looking after her, to himself*]. But not the last word, my lady!

[*He sits at the writing table, and begins to write, at the same time calling, not very loudly, "WATKINS!" The valet immediately appears, centre.*]

WATKINS. Yessir?

RAJA [*tearing a sheet off the pad and handing it to him*]. Read that.

WATKINS. A message to be sent out, sir?

RAJA. Yes.

WATKINS [*reading*]. "The lady has come to terms. She will enter His Highness's household." Quite so, sir. What suite will she occupy?

RAJA. My innocent Watkins! Do you think it's true? What have I to do with a stuck-up Englishwoman? It's only a bait for the Feringhis. You shall send it out in their hearing, and if either of them can read the Morse code, the devil's in it if he doesn't give himself away.

WATKINS. Beg pardon, sir; I didn't quite catch on.

RAJA. If they move an eyelash I'll take care they never see the inside of this room again.

WATKINS. Am I to send this to India, sir?

RAJA. To anywhere or nowhere. Reduce the current, so that no one can pick it up. So long as it's heard in this room, that's all I want.

WATKINS. But when am I to send it, sir?

RAJA. Listen. I'll get them in here on the pretext of a little wireless demonstration, and then I'll tell you to send out an order to Tashkent for champagne. That'll be your cue. Go ahead—and send slowly.

WATKINS. Shall I ask you whether I'm to code it, sir?

RAJA. You may as well. It'll give artistic finish to the thing.

WATKINS. Very good, Your 'Ighness. But afterwards, —if, as you was saying, they was to try to corrupt me, sir—

RAJA. Corrupt *you*? That would be painting the lily with a vengeance.

WATKINS [*with a touch of annoyance*]. Suppose they tries to get at me, sir—what are your instructions?

RAJA. How do you mean?

WATKINS. Shall I let on to take the bait?

RAJA. You may do exactly as you please. I have the most implicit confidence in you, Watkins.

WATKINS. You are very good, sir.

RAJA. I know that anything they can offer you would have to be paid either in England or in India, and that you daren't show your nose in either country. You have a very comfortable job here—

WATKINS. My grateful thanks to you, sir.

RAJA. And you don't want to give the hangman a job, either in Lahore or in London.

WATKINS. The case in a nutshell, sir. But I thought if I was to *pretend* to send a message for them, it might keep them quiet-like.

RAJA. Very true, Watkins. It would not only keep them quiet, but the illusion of security would raise their spirits, which would be a humane action. I am always on the side of humanity.

WATKINS. Just so, sir. Then I'll humour them.

RAJA. Yes, if they want you to send a message. If they try to "get at," not only you, but the instrument, call the guard and let me know at once.

WATKINS. Certainly, sir.

RAJA. Now open the door and stand by. You have the message?

WATKINS. [*Producing the slip from his pocket, reads:*] "The lady has come to terms. She—"

RAJA [*interrupting*]. Yes, that's right. [*As WATKINS is opening the door.*] Oh, look here—when you've finished, you'd better lock the door, and say, "Any orders, sir?" If I say "No orders, Watkins," it'll mean I'm satisfied they don't understand. If I think they *do* understand, I'll give you what orders I think necessary.

WATKINS. Very good, sir.

[*He opens the folding doors wide, revealing a small room, in which is a wireless installation.*]

RAJA [*at billiard-room door*]. Oh, Major, you were saying you had no experience of wireless. If you've finished your game, it might amuse you to see it at work. Watkins is just going to send out a message. Would Mrs. Crespin care to come?

CRESPIN [*at door*]. Yes—why not? Will you come, Lucilla?

[CRESPIN enters, followed by LUCILLA and TRAHERNE. The RAJA eyes them closely so that they have no opportunity to make any sign to each other.]

RAJA. This, you see, is the apparatus. All ready, Watkins? [*To the others:*] Won't you sit down? [*To WATKINS:*] You have the order for Tashkent?

WATKINS [*producing paper*]. Yes, Your 'Ighness; but I haven't coded it.

RAJA. Oh, never mind; send it in clear. Even if some outsider does pick it up, I daresay we can order three cases of champagne without causing international complications.

[CRESPIN and TRAHERNE sit in the arm-chairs, right. LUCILLA is about to sit on the couch, but seeing the RAJA make a move to sit beside her, she passes behind the writing table and sits in the swivel chair. The RAJA sits on the sofa. WATKINS begins to transmit,—pauses.]

RAJA. He's waiting for the reply signal.

[*A pause.*]

CRESPIN. May I take one of your excellent cigars, Raja?

RAJA. By all means.

[CRESPIN lights a cigar.]

WATKINS. I've got them. [*Proceeds to send the message: "The lady has come to terms," etc.*]

CRESPIN. [*A moment after the transmission has begun, says in a low voice to the RAJA:*] May we speak?

RAJA. Oh, yes—you won't be heard in Tashkent.

CRESPIN [*holding out his cigarette case*]. Have a cigarette, Traherne.

TRAHERNE. Thanks. [*He takes a cigarette. CRESPIN strikes a match and lights the cigarette, saying meanwhile:*]

CRESPIN. Let us smoke and drink, for tomorrow we—
[*Blows out the match.*]

[*Silence until the transmission ends.*]

RAJA. That's how it's done!

TRAHERNE. How many words did he send?

RAJA. What was it, Watkins? "Forward by tomorrow's

caravan twelve cases champagne. Usual brand. Charge our account"; was that it?

WATKINS. That's right, sir.

RAJA. Twelve words.

CRESPIN. And can they really make sense out of these fireworks?

RAJA. I hope so—else we shall run short of champagne.

WATKINS [*locking the folding door*]. Any orders, Your 'Ighness?

RAJA. No orders, Watkins.

[*As he is going out, WATKINS meets at the door a SOLDIER, who says a few words to him.*]

WATKINS [*turning*]. The 'Igh Priest is waiting to see Your 'Ighness.

RAJA. Oh, show him in.

[*WATKINS ushers in the HIGH PRIEST OF THE GODDESS, and then exits. The HIGH PRIEST's personality is unmistakably sinister. The RAJA, after a word of greeting, turns to the others.*]

RAJA. I mentioned my Archbishop of York. This is he. Allow me to introduce you. Your Grace, Mrs. Crespin—Major Crespin—Dr. Traherne.

[*The PRIEST, understanding the situation, makes a sort of contemptuous salaam.*]

The Archbishop's manners are not good. You will excuse him. He regards you, I regret to say, as unclean creatures, whose very presence means pollution. He would be a mine of information for an anthropologist.

[*He exchanges a few words with the PRIEST, and turns again to his guests.*]

His Grace reminds me of some arrangements for tomorrow's ceremony, which, as Archbishop of Canterbury, I must attend to in person. You will excuse me for half an hour? Pray make yourselves at home. Tiffin at half past twelve.

[*He speaks a few words to the PRIEST, who replies in a sort of growl.*]

His Grace says *au revoir*—and so do I.

[*Exits, followed by the PRIEST. Both TRAHERNE and*

LUCILLA *are about to speak. CRESPIN motions them to be cautious. He goes to the billiard-room, opens the door, looks around and closes it again. LUCILLA examines the balcony. TRAHERNE slips up to the centre door and noiselessly tests it.]*

TRAHERNE [*to CRESPIN*]. What was the message?

CRESPIN. It said that the lady had accepted her life—on his terms.

TRAHERNE. Oh!—a trap for us.

CRESPIN. Yes. A put-up job.

LUCILLA. You gave no sign, Antony. I think he must have been reassured.

TRAHERNE. Evidently; or he wouldn't have left us here.

CRESPIN. What to do now?

TRAHERNE. Can we break open the door?

CRESPIN. No good. It would make a noise. We'd be interrupted, and then it would be all up.

TRAHERNE. Well, then, the next step is to try to bribe Watkins.

CRESPIN. I don't believe it's a bit of good.

TRAHERNE. Nor I. The fellow's a thorough-paced scoundrel. But we *might* succeed, and if we don't even try, they'll suspect that we're plotting something else. If we can convince them that we're at our wits' end, we've the better chance of taking them off their guard.

LUCILLA. Yes—you see that, Antony?

CRESPIN. Perhaps you're right. But, even if the damned scoundrel can be bought, what good is it if I can't remember the wave-length and the call for Amil-Serai?

LUCILLA. You'll think of it all of a sudden.

CRESPIN. Not if I keep racking my brains for it. If I could get my mind off it, the damned thing might come back to me.

TRAHERNE. All the more reason for action. But first, we must settle what message to send if we get the chance.

LUCILLA [*sits at writing-table*]. Dictate—I'll write.

TRAHERNE. What about this? "Major Crespin, wife, Traherne imprisoned, Rukh, Raja's palace, lives in danger."

[LUCILLA writes on an envelope which she takes from the paper-case.]

CRESPIN. We want something more definite.

LUCILLA. How would this do? "Death threatened tomorrow evening. Rescue urgent."

TRAHERNE. Excellent.

[LUCILLA finishes the message, and hands it to CRESPIN.]

CRESPIN [reads]. "Major Crespin, wife, Traherne, imprisoned, Rukh, Raja's palace. Death threatened tomorrow evening. Rescue urgent." [Takes the paper.] Right. I'll keep it ready.

TRAHERNE. Now, how to get hold of Watkins?

LUCILLA [at the table]. There's a bell here. Shall I try it?

TRAHERNE. Hold on a moment. We have to decide what to do if he won't take money, and we have to use force in order to get his keys.

CRESPIN [looking around]. There's nothing here to knock him on the head with—not even a chair you can lift—

TRAHERNE. Not a curtain cord to truss him up with—

LUCILLA. The first thing would be to gag him, wouldn't it? [Takes off her scarf.] Would this do for that?

TRAHERNE. Capital! [Takes the scarf, ties a knot in it, and places it on the upper end of the sofa.]

CRESPIN. What about a billiard cue?

TRAHERNE. If he saw it around he'd smell a rat.

CRESPIN. Then there's only one thing—

TRAHERNE. What? [CRESPIN points to the balcony, and makes a significant gesture.]

LUCILLA. Oh! [Shrinks away from the window.]

TRAHERNE. I'm afraid it can't be helped. There's a drop of a good hundred feet.

CRESPIN. None too much for him.

TRAHERNE. When he locked that door he put the key in his trousers' pocket. We must remember to get it before—

LUCILLA. But if you kill him and still don't remember the call, we shall be no better off than we are now.

TRAHERNE. We shall be no worse off.

CRESPIN. Better, by Jove! For if I can get three minutes at that instrument, the Raja can't tell whether we have communicated or not. [*He takes up the glass of whiskey-and-soda which he has poured out before.*]

LUCILLA. Oh, Antony!

CRESPIN. Don't be a fool, Lu. [*Gulps down the drink, and says as he pours out more whiskey:*] It's because I'm so unnaturally sober that my brain won't work. [*Drinks the whiskey raw.*] Now ring that bell. [*LUCILLA does so.*] You do the talking, Traherne. The fellow's damned insolence gets on my nerves.

TRAHERNE. All right. [*Sits at the writing-table.*]

CRESPIN. Look out—

[*Enter WATKINS, second door, right.*]

WATKINS. You rang, sir? [*Standing by the door.*]

TRAHERNE. Yes, Watkins, we want a few words with you. Do you mind coming over here? We don't want to speak loud.

WATKINS. There's no one understands English, sir.

TRAHERNE. Please oblige me, all the same.

WATKINS [*coming forward*]. Now, sir!

TRAHERNE. I daresay you can guess what we want with you.

WATKINS. I'm no 'and at guessin', sir. I'd rather you'd put it plain.

TRAHERNE. Well, you know that we've fallen into the hands of bloodthirsty savages? You know what is proposed for tomorrow?

WATKINS. I've 'eard as your numbers is up.

TRAHERNE. You surely don't intend to stand by and see us murdered—three of your own people, and one of them a lady?

WATKINS. My own people, is it? And a *lady*—!

LUCILLA. A woman, then, Watkins.

WATKINS. What has my own people ever done for me—or women either—that I should lose a cushy job and risk

my neck for the sake of the three of you? I wouldn't do it for all your bloomin' England, I tell you straight.

CRESPIN. It's no good, Traherne. Come down to tin tacks.

TRAHERNE. Only a sighting shot, Major. It was just possible we might have misread our man.

WATKINS. You did if you took 'im for a V. C. 'ero wot 'ud lay down his life for England, 'ome, and beauty. The first thing England ever done for me was to 'ave me sent to a reformatory for pinching a silver rattle off of a young haristocrat in a p'rambulator. That, and the likes of that, is wot I've got to thank England for. And why did I do it? Because my mother would have bashed my face in if I'd have come back empty-handed. That's wot 'ome and beauty has meant for me. W'y should I care more for a woman being scragged than what I do for a man?

TRAHERNE. Ah, yes, I quite see your point of view. But the question now is: What'll you *take* to get us out of this?

WATKINS. Get you out of this! If you was to offer me millions, 'ow could I do that?

TRAHERNE. By going into that room and sending this message through to the Amil-Serai aerodome.

[CRESPIN *hands* WATKINS *the message*. *He reads it through and places it on the table.*]

WATKINS. So that's the game, is it?

TRAHERNE. That, as you say, is the game.

WATKINS. You know what you're riskin'?

TRAHERNE. What do you mean?

WATKINS. W'y, if the Guv'nor suspected as you'd got a word through to India, ten to one he'd wipe you off the slate like that [*snapping his fingers*] without waiting for tomorrow.

CRESPIN. That makes no difference. We've got to face it.

TRAHERNE. Come now! On your own showing, Mr. Watkins, loyalty to your master oughtn't to stand in your way. I don't suppose gratitude is one of your weaknesses.

WATKINS. Gratitude! To 'im? What for? I'm not badly off here, to be sure, but it's nothing to wot I does for 'im;

and I 'ate 'im for 'is funny little ways. D'you think I don't see that he's always pulling my leg?

TRAHERNE. Well, then, you won't mind selling him. We've only to settle the price.

WATKINS. That's all very fine, sir; but what price 'ave you gents to offer?

TRAHERNE. Nothing down—no spot cash—that's clear. You'll have to take our word for whatever bargain we come to.

WATKINS. Your word! How do I know—?

TRAHERNE. Oh, our written word. We'll give it to you in writing.

WATKINS [*after thinking for a moment*]. If I was to 'elp you out, there must be no more fairy-tales about any of you 'avin' seen me in India.

TRAHERNE. All right. We accept your assurance that you never were there.

WATKINS. And see here, Dr. Traherne—you know very well I couldn't stay here after I'd helped you to escape—leastways, if I stayed, it'd be in my grave. You'll 'ave to take me with you—and for that I can only have your word. Supposing you could get the message through, and the English was to come, no writing could bind you if you chose to leave me in the lurch.

TRAHERNE. Quite true. I'm afraid you'll have to trust us for that. But I give you my word of honour that we would be as careful of your safety as if you were one of ourselves. I suppose you know that, strange as you may think it, there are people in the world that would rather die than break a solemn promise.

CRISPIN. Even to a hound like you, Watkins.

WATKINS. I advise you to keep a civil tongue in yer 'ead, Major. Don't forget that I 'ave you in the 'ollow of my 'and.

TRAHERNE. True, Watkins; and the hollow of your hand is a very disagreeable place to be in. That's why we're willing to pay well to get out of it. Come, now, what shall we say?

WATKINS. Well, what about a little first instalment? You ain't quite on your uppers, are you, now? You could come down with something, be it ever so humble?

TRAHERNE [*examining his pocket-book*]. I have 300 rupees and five ten-pound notes. [*Places the money on the table.*]

WATKINS. And you, Major?

CRESPIN. Two hundred and fifty rupees. [*Crosses and lays the notes on the table.*] Oh, and some loose change.

WATKINS [*nobly*]. Oh, never mind the chicken-feed! And the lady?

LUCILLA. I gave my last rupee to your wife, Watkins.

WATKINS. Well, that's about £120 to go on with.

TRAHERNE [*placing his hand on the heap of notes*]. There. That's your first instalment. Now what about the balance? Shall we say £1000 apiece?

WATKINS. A thousand apiece! Three thousand pounds! You're joking, Dr. Traherne! Wot would £3000 be to me in England? W'y, I'd 'ave to take to valeting again. No, no, sir! If I'm to do this job, I must 'ave enough to make a gentleman of me.

[CRESPIN, TRAHERNE, and LUCILLA burst out laughing.]

WATKINS. Well, you are the queerest lot as ever I come across. Your lives is 'anging by a 'air, and yet you can larf!

LUCILLA [*hysterically*]. It's your own fault, Watkins. Why will you be so funny? [*Her laughter turns to tears and she buries her face in the end of the couch, shaken with sobs.*]

TRAHERNE. I'm afraid what you ask is beyond our means, Watkins. But I double my bid—two thousand apiece.

WATKINS. You'll 'ave to double it again, sir, and a little more. You write me out an I. O. U. for fifteen thousand pounds, and I'll see wot can be done.

CRESPIN. Well, you are the most consummate—

WATKINS. If your lives ain't worth five thousand apiece to you, there's nothing doing. For my place here is worth

fifteen thousand to me. And there's all the risk, too—I'm not charging you nothing for that.

TRAHERNE. We appreciate your generosity, Watkins. Fifteen thousand be it!

WATKINS. Now you're talking.

[TRAHERNE rapidly writes and signs the I. O. U. and hands it to WATKINS.]

WATKINS. That's right, sir; but the Major must sign it, too.

CRESPIN [crosses to the table, on which WATKINS places the paper, writes, throws down the pen]. There you are, damn you!

TRAHERNE. Now get to work quick, and call up Amil-Serai.

WATKINS. Right you are, sir. [Picks up the envelope and begins, in a leisurely way, unlocking the centre door.]

CRESPIN. Isn't there some special call you must send out to get Amil-Serai?

WATKINS. Oh, yes, sir, I know it.

[WATKINS takes his seat at the instrument, with his back to the snugger, and begins to work it.]

CRESPIN [whispers]. That's not a service call.

[A pause.]

WATKINS. Right! Got them, sir. Now the message.

CRESPIN [as WATKINS works the key, CRESPIN spells out:]
"The—white—goats—are—ready—for—" [To TRAHERNE.]
No, but the black sheep is! Come on!

[CRESPIN tiptoes up toward WATKINS followed by TRAHERNE. As he passes the upper end of the sofa CRESPIN picks up LUCILLA'S scarf and hands it to TRAHERNE, meantime producing his own handkerchief. LUCILLA rises, her hand pressed to her mouth. The men steal up close behind WATKINS. Suddenly TRAHERNE jams the gag in WATKINS'S mouth, and ties the ends of the scarf. WATKINS attempts a cry, but it trails off into a gurgle. CRESPIN meantime grips WATKINS'S arms behind, and ties the wrists with his handkerchief. TRAHERNE makes fast the gag, and the two lift him, struggling, and carry him towards the window. WATKINS'S

head falls back, and his terror-stricken eyes can be seen over the swathing gag. They rest him for a moment on the balustrade.]

TRAHERNE. Must we—?

CRESPIN. Nothing else for it—one, two, three! [*They heave him over. LUCILLA, who has been watching, petrified, gives a gasping cry.*]

CRESPIN. At least we haven't taken it lying down! [*He pours out some whiskey and is about to drink when he pauses, puts down the glass, and then cries in great excitement:*] Hold on! Don't speak! [*A pause.*] I have it! [*Another pause.*] Yes, by God, I have it! I've remembered the call! Can you lock that door?

LUCILLA [*at second door, left*]. No key this side!

TRAHERNE [*whispering, and running to the door*]. Don't open it. There are soldiers in the passage. I'll hold it. [*He stations himself before the door. CRESPIN rushes to the instrument and rapidly examines it.*]

CRESPIN. The scoundrel had reduced the current. [*Makes an adjustment with feverish haste.*] Now the wave length! [*More adjustment. He begins to transmit. A pause.*]

TRAHERNE. Do you get any answer?

CRESPIN. No, no; I don't expect any—I'm sure they haven't the power. But it's an even chance that I get them all the same. [*He goes on transmitting hurriedly while TRAHERNE and LUCILLA stand breathless, TRAHERNE with his shoulder to the door.*]

TRAHERNE. Some one's coming up this passage! Go on! Go on! I'll hold the door.

[*Another slight pause, while CRESPIN transmits feverishly. Suddenly TRAHERNE braces himself against the door, gripping the handle. After a moment, there is a word of command outside, the sound of shoulders heaved against the door, and it is gradually pushed open by three guards. TRAHERNE is shoved back by its motion.*]

[*The RAJA enters, rushes forward and grasps the situation.*]

RAJA. Ah! When the cat's away—

[*He whips out a revolver and fires.*]

CRESPIN. Got me, by God!

[*He falls forward over the instrument, but immediately recovers himself, and rapidly unmakes the adjustments. LUCILLA and TRAHERNE catch him as he staggers back from the instrument, and lay him on the couch.*]

TRAHERNE [*kneeling and supporting him*]. Brandy!

[*LUCILLA gets the glass. They put it to his lips.*]

[*The RAJA meanwhile goes to the wireless table, sees the draft message and reads it.*]

RAJA [*holding out the paper*]. How much of this did you get through?

CRESPIN [*raising himself a little*]. Damn you—none!
[*Falls back dead.*]

LUCILLA [*crying out*]. Antony!

RAJA. All over, eh?

[*TRAHERNE, still kneeling, makes an affirmative sign.*]

[*At this moment a noise is heard outside, and three soldiers burst open the door and rush in. One of them speaks to the RAJA, pointing to the window, the other two rush up to TRAHERNE, seize him and drag him over to the left. LUCILLA remains kneeling by CRESPIN'S body. The RAJA goes calmly over to the window and looks out.*]

RAJA [*returning to centre*]. Tut tut—most inconvenient. And foolish on your part—for now, if my brothers should be reprieved, we cannot hear of it. [*Looks at the message reflectively.*] Otherwise, the situation remains unchanged. We adhere to our programme for tomorrow. The Major has only a few hours' start of you.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—A gloomy hall, its roof supported by four wooden columns, two in a row, rudely carved with distorted animal and human figures. The walls are also of rudely-carved wood, and are pierced all round, at the height of about twelve feet, by a sort of clerestory—a series of oblong slits or unglazed windows through which the sky can be

seen. The general tone of the wood is dark brown, but the interstices between the carvings have here and there been filled in with dull red. There is a high curtained doorway, right, leading to a sort of robing-room. Opposite to it, left, a two-leaved wooden door, closed with a heavy wooden bolt. An oblong hole in the door, with a sliding shutter, enables the guard within to inspect whoever approaches from without. At the back, centre, is a wide opening, curtained at the beginning of the act. When the curtains are withdrawn, they reveal a sort of balcony or tribune, raised by two steps above the level of the hall, over the balustrade of which can be seen the head and shoulders of a colossal image of the Goddess, apparently at a distance of some fifty yards. Between the two foremost columns, on a dais of two steps, a wide throne, which has for its backing a figure of the Goddess carved in high relief, amid a good deal of barbaric tracery. The figure is green, but there are touches of gold in her crown, her ornaments, and in the tracery. A low brazier rests on the ground in front of the throne.

The hall is a sort of anteroom to the public place of sacrifice without.

Late afternoon light comes in through the clerestory on the left.

When the curtain rises, a group of Priests is gathered round the doorway, right, while the CHIEF PRIEST stands at the centre, holding the curtains a little way apart and looking out. A Priest is on guard at the door, left.

For a moment after the rise of the curtain, there is a regular and subdued murmur from the crowd without. Then it swells into a chorus of execrations. The CHIEF PRIEST gives an order to the other Priests, right, one of whom goes off through the doorway. The guard at the door, left, slips back the shutter and looks out, then unbolts the door, and admits TRAHERNE, strapped to a mountain chair, and guarded by two soldiers, who withdraw. At the same time, the RAJA, in splendid Eastern attire, enters, right.

RAJA. Well, Doctor, it doesn't appear that any "god from

the machine" is going to interfere with our programme.

TRAHERNE. You are bringing a terrible vengeance upon yourself.

RAJA. Think, my dear Doctor. If, as the Major said, he did *not* get your S. O. S. through, I have nothing to fear. If he lied, and *did* get it through, nothing can ultimately save me, and I may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb.

TRAHERNE [*writhing in his bonds*]. You might have spared me this!

RAJA. A ritual detail, Doctor; not quite without reason. Persons lacking in self-control might throw themselves to the ground or otherwise disarrange the ceremony. [*He speaks a word, and the bearers promptly release TRAHERNE, and carry the chair out, left.*]

TRAHERNE. What have you done with Mrs. Crespin?

RAJA. Don't be alarmed. She'll be here in due time.

TRAHERNE. Listen to me, Raja. Do what you will with me, but let Mrs. Crespin go. Send her to India or to Russia, and I am sure, for her children's sake, she will swear to keep absolute silence as to her husband's fate and mine.

RAJA. You don't believe, then, that I couldn't save you if I would?

TRAHERNE. Believe it? No!

RAJA. You are quite right, my dear Doctor. I am not a High Priest for nothing. I might work the oracle. I might get a command from the Goddess to hurt no hair upon your heads.

TRAHERNE. Then what devilish pleasure do you find in putting us to death?

RAJA. Pleasure? The pleasure of a double vengeance. Vengeance for today—my brothers—and vengeance for centuries of subjection and insult. Do you know what brought you here? It was not blind chance, any more than it was the Goddess. It was my will, my craving for revenge, that drew you here by a subtle, irresistible magnetism. My will is my religion—my god. And by that god I have sworn that you shall not escape me.

[*Yells from the crowd outside.*]

Ah, they are bringing Mrs. Crespin.

[*The PRIEST unbolts the door, right, and LUCILLA is carried in.*]

RAJA. I apologize, Madam, for the manners of my people. Their fanaticism is beyond my control.

[*He says a word to the bearers, who release LUCILLA.*

TRAHERNE gives her his hand, and she steps from the chair, which the bearers remove, left.]

TRAHERNE. How long have we left?

RAJA. Till the sun's rim touches the crest of the mountain. A blast of our great mountain horn will announce the appointed hour, and you will be led out to the sacred enclosure. You saw the colossal image of the Goddess out yonder?

[*He points to the back. They look at each other in silence.*]

TRAHERNE. Will you grant us one last request?

RAJA. By all means, if it is in my power. In spite of your inconsiderate action of yesterday—

TRAHERNE. Inconsiderate—?

RAJA. Watkins, you know—poor Watkins—a great loss to me! But *à la guerre comme à la guerre!* I bear no malice for a fair act of war. I am anxious to show you every consideration.

TRAHERNE. Then you will leave us alone for the time that remains to us.

RAJA. Why, by all means. And oh, by the way, you need have no fear of the—ceremony—being protracted. It will be brief and—I trust—painless. The High Church Party are not incapable of cruelty; but I have resolutely set my face against it. [*LUCILLA has meanwhile stood stonily gazing straight in front of her. The RAJA reflects for a moment, and then goes up to her.*] Before I go, Madam, may I remind you of my offer of yesterday? It is not yet too late. [*LUCILLA takes no notice.*] Is it just to your children to refuse? [*She looks at him stonily, saying nothing. After a pause.*] Immovable? So be it! [*He turns to go. At this*

moment a great yell of triumphant hatred goes up from the populace.]

RAJA. Your husband's body, Madam. They are laying it at the feet of the Goddess.

LUCILLA. You promised me—

RAJA. That it should be burnt. I will keep my promise. But you see I had three brothers—a head for a head.

[He goes into the inner chamber, encircled by his Priests. Only the GUARD at the door, left, remains, half hidden by the door jamb.]

[LUCILLA and TRAHERNE are left alone. LUCILLA sinks down upon the broad base of the foremost pillar, right.]

LUCILLA. So this is the end!

TRAHERNE. What offer did that devil make you?

LUCILLA. Oh, I didn't mean to tell you, but I may as well. He is an ingenious tormentor. He offered yesterday to let me live, and to kidnap the children and bring them here to me—you know on what terms.

TRAHERNE. To bring the children here?

LUCILLA. He said in a month I might have them in my arms. Think of it! Ronny and Iris in my arms! *[A pause. TRAHERNE stands with his back to her.]*

TRAHERNE *[in a low and unsteady voice]*. Are you sure you did right to refuse?

LUCILLA. Do you mean—?

TRAHERNE *[louder and almost harshly]*. Are you sure it is not wrong to refuse?

LUCILLA. Oh, how can you—? Right? Wrong? What are right and wrong to me now? If I could see my children again, would any scruple of "right" or "wrong" make me shrink from anything that was possible? But this is so utterly, utterly impossible.

TRAHERNE. Forgive me. You know it would add an unspeakable horror to death if I had to leave you here. But I felt I must ask you whether you had fully considered—

LUCILLA. I have thought of nothing else through all these torturing hours.

TRAHERNE. How brave you are!

LUCILLA. Not brave, not brave. If I *could* live, I *would*—there, I confess it! But I should die of shame and misery, and leave my children—to that man. Or, if I *did* live, what sort of a mother should I be to them? They would be much better without me! Oh, my precious, precious darlings!

[*She clasps her arms across her breast, and rocks herself in agony. A short silence.*]

TRAHERNE [*lays his hand on her shoulder*]. Lucilla!

LUCILLA [*looking up*]. Oh, Basil, say you think it won't be altogether bad for them! They will never know anything of their father now, but what was good. And their mother will simply have vanished into the skies. They will think she has flown away to heaven—and who knows but it may be true? There may be *something* beyond this hell.

TRAHERNE. We shall know soon, Lucilla.

LUCILLA. But to go away and leave them without a word—! Poor little things, poor little things.

TRAHERNE. They will remember you as something very dear and beautiful. The very mystery will be like a halo about you.

LUCILLA. Shall I see them again, Basil? Tell me that.

[*A pause.*]

TRAHERNE. Who knows? Even to comfort you, I won't say I am certain. But I do sincerely think you may.

LUCILLA [*smiling woefully*]. You think there is a sporting chance?

TRAHERNE. More than that. This life is such a miracle—could any other be more incredible?

LUCILLA. But even if I should meet them in another world, they would not be *my* Ronny and Iris, but a strange man and a strange woman, built up of experiences in which I had had no share. Oh, it was cunning, cunning, what that devil said to me! He said "God Himself cannot give you back their childhood."

TRAHERNE. How do you know that God is going to take their childhood from you? You may be with them this very night—with them, unseen, but perhaps not unfelt, all the days of their life.

LUCILLA. You are saying that to make what poor Antony called a "haze" for me—to soften the horror of darkness that is waiting for us? Don't give me "dope," Basil—I can face things without it.

TRAHERNE. I mean every word of it. [*A pause.*] Why do you smile?

LUCILLA. At a thought that came to me—the thought of poor Antony as a filmy, purified spirit. It seems so unthinkable.

TRAHERNE. Why unthinkable? Why may he not still exist, though he has left behind him the nerves, the cravings, that tormented him—and you? You have often told me that there was something fine in the depths of his nature; and you know how he showed it yesterday.

LUCILLA. Oh, if I could only tell the children how he died!

TRAHERNE. But his true self was chained to a machine that was hopelessly out of gear. The chain is broken: the machine lies out there—scrapped. Do you think that he was just that machine, and nothing else?

LUCILLA. I don't know. I only feel that Antony spiritualized would not be Antony. And you, Basil—if Antony leaves his—failings, you must leave behind your work. Do you *want* another life in which there is no work to be done—no disease to be rooted out? [*With a mournful smile.*] Don't tell me you don't long to take your microscope with you wherever you may be going.

TRAHERNE. Perhaps there are microscopes awaiting me there.

LUCILLA. Spirit microscopes for spirit microbes? You don't believe that, Basil.

TRAHERNE. I neither believe nor disbelieve. In all we can say of another life we are like children blind from birth, trying to picture the forms and colours of the rainbow.

LUCILLA. But if the forms and colours we know are of no use to us, what comfort are we to find in formless, colourless possibilities? If we are freed from all human selfishness, shall I love my children more than any other woman's? Can I

love a child I cannot kiss, that cannot look into my eyes and kiss me back again?

TRAHERNE [*starting up*]. Oh, Lucilla, don't!

LUCILLA. What do you mean?

TRAHERNE. Don't remind me of all we are losing! I meant to leave it all unspoken—the thought of *him* lying out there seemed to tie my tongue. But we have only one moment on this side of eternity. Lucilla, shall I go on?

[*After a perceptible pause, LUCILLA bows her head.*]

Do you think it is with a light heart that I turn my back upon the life of earth and all it might have meant for you and me—for you and me, Lucilla!

LUCILLA. Yes, Basil, for you and me.

TRAHERNE. Rather than live *without* you, I am glad to die *with* you; but oh, what a wretched gladness compared with that of living with you and loving you! I wonder if you guess what it has meant to me, ever since we met at Dehra Dun, to see you as another man's wife, bound to him by ties I couldn't ask you to break. It has been hell, hell! [*Looking up with a mournful smile.*] My love has not been quite selfish, Lucilla, since I can say I really do love your children, though I know they have stood between me and heaven.

LUCILLA. Yes, Basil, I know. I have known from the beginning.

TRAHERNE. Oh, Lucilla, have we not been fools, fools? We have sacrificed to an idol as senseless as that—[*with a gesture towards the image*] all the glory and beauty of life! What do I care for a bloodless, shadowy life—life in the abstract, with all the senses extinct? Is there not something in the depths of our hearts that cries out "We don't want it! Better eternal sleep!"

LUCILLA. Oh, Basil—you are going back to your own wisdom.

TRAHERNE. Wisdom! What has wisdom to say to love, thwarted and unfulfilled? You were right when you said that it is a mockery to speak of love without hands to clasp, without lips to kiss. We may be going to some pale parody

of life; but in our cowardice we have killed love for ever and ever.

LUCILLA. No, Basil, don't call it cowardice. I, too, regret—perhaps as much as you—that things were—as they were. But not even your love could have made up to me for my children.

[A trumpet-blast is heard—a prolonged deep, wailing sound.]

There is the signal! Good-bye, dear love.

[She holds out her hands to him. They kiss and stand embraced, until, at a sound of tom-toms and a low muttered chant from behind the curtains, right, they part, and stand hand in hand, facing the doorway.]

[Suddenly, at a great shattering note from a gong, the curtains of the doorway part, and a procession of chanting Priests enters, all wearing fantastic robes and headdresses, and all, except the CHIEF PRIEST, masked. The RAJA follows them, also wearing a priestly headdress, and gorgeously robed. Behind him came three dark-robed and masked figures, carrying heavy swords. Musicians bring up the rear. The Priests group themselves round the throne.]

RAJA *[to TRAHERNE and LUCILLA, who are standing in front of the throne]*. May I trouble you to move a little aside? I am, for the moment, not a king, but a priest, and must observe a certain dignity. Ridiculous, isn't it?

[They move over to the left of the throne. He advances in stately fashion and seats himself on it.]

RAJA *[to Lucilla]*. Must I do violence to my feelings, Madam, by including you in the approaching ceremony? There is still time.

[LUCILLA is silent.]

We autocrats are badly brought up. We are not accustomed to having our desires, or even our whims, thwarted.

TRAHERNE *[interrupting]*. Will you never cease tormenting this lady?

RAJA *[totally disregarding him]*. Remember my power.

If I may not take you back to my palace as my Queen, I can send you back as my slave.

[*A pause.*]

Have you nothing to say?

LUCILLA. Nothing.

RAJA. I repeat my offer as to your children.

LUCILLA. I would die a hundred times rather than see them in your hands.

RAJA. Remember, too, that, if I so will it, you cannot save them by dying. I can have them kidnapped—or—I can have them killed.

[*LUCILLA shrieks. TRAHERNE, with a cry of "Devil" makes a leap at the RAJA's throat, pinning him against the back of the throne. The Priests instantly pull TRAHERNE off, pinion him, and drag him over to the right. They talk furiously to each other, and the CHIEF PRIEST prostrates himself before the RAJA, apparently in urgent supplication. The RAJA, who is now to the right of the throne, LUCILLA remaining on the left, quits them with some difficulty, and then turns to TRAHERNE.*]

RAJA. Chivalrous but ill-advised, Dr. Traherne, I regret it, and so will you. My colleagues here insist that, as you have laid impious hands on the chief of their sacred caste, your death alone will not appease the fury of the Goddess. They insist on subjecting you to a process of expiation—a ritual of great antiquity—but—

TRAHERNE. You mean torture?

RAJA. Well—yes.

[*LUCILLA rushes forward with a cry.*]

Not you, Madam—not you—

LUCILLA. I must speak to you—speak to you alone! Send Dr. Traherne away.

TRAHERNE. Lucilla! What are you thinking of! Lucilla—!

[*The RAJA motions to the Priests, who do something to TRAHERNE which causes him to crumple up, and his voice dies away.*]

LUCILLA. I beg you—I beg you! One minute—no more!

[*The RAJA looks at her for a moment, then shrugs his*

shoulders and gives an order. TRAHERNE is dragged through the doorway, right.]

[LUCILLA, in her desperation, has rushed up the steps of the throne. She now sinks, exhausted, upon the end of the throne itself.]

LUCILLA. Let him go, send him back to India unharmed, and—it shall be as you wish.

RAJA. Soho! You will do for your lover—to save him a little additional pain—what you would not do to have your children restored to you! Suppose I agree—would *he* accept this sacrifice?

LUCILLA. No, no, he wouldn't—but he must have no choice. That is part of the bargain. Send him—bound hand and foot, if need be—down to Kashmir, and put him over the frontier—

RAJA. You don't care what he thinks of you?

LUCILLA. He will know what to think.

RAJA. And I too, Madam, know what to think. *[Kneeling with one knee on the throne, he seizes her by the shoulders and turns her face towards him.]* Come, look me in the eyes and tell me that you honestly intend to fulfil your bargain! *[Her head droops.]* I knew it! You are playing with me! But the confiding barbarian is not so simple as you imagine. No woman has ever tried to fool me that has not repented it. You think, when you have to pay up, you will fob me off with your dead body. Let me tell you, I have no use for you dead—I want you with all the blood in your veins, with all the pride in that damned sly brain of yours. I want to make my plaything of your beauty, my mockery of your pride. I want to strip off the delicate English lady, and come down to the elemental woman, the handmaid and the instrument of man. *[Changing his tone.]* Come now, I'll make you a plain offer. I will put Dr. Traherne over the frontier, and, as they set him free, my people shall hand him a letter written by you at my dictation. You will tell him that you have determined to accept my protection and make this your home. Consequently you wish to have your children conveyed to you here—

LUCILLA. Never—never—never! I will make no bargain that involves my children.

RAJA. You see! You will give me no hostages for the fulfillment of your bond. But a pledge of your good faith I must have. For without a pledge, Madam, I don't believe in it one little bit.

LUCILLA. What pledge?

RAJA. Only one is left—Dr. Traherne himself. I may—though it will strain my power to the uttermost—save his life, while keeping him in prison. Then, when you have fulfilled your bond—fulfilled it to the uttermost, mark you!—when you have borne me a child—I will let him go free. But the moment you attempt to evade your pledge, by death or by escape, I will hand him over to the priests to work their will with; and I will put no restraint upon their savage instincts. [*Pause.*] Choose, my dear lady, choose!

[*The subdued murmur of the crowd below, which has been faintly audible during the foregoing scene, ceases, and in the silence is heard a faint, but rapidly increasing, whirr and throb.*]

[LUCILLA, who has been crouching on the steps of the throne, looks up slowly, hope dawning in her face. For a few seconds she says nothing, waiting to assure herself that she can believe her ears. Then she says in a low voice, with a sort of sob of relief:]

LUCILLA. Aeroplanes! [*She springs up with a shriek.*] The aeroplanes! Basil! Basil! The aeroplanes! [*She rushes out through the doorway, right, thrusting aside the incoming Priests, who are too amazed to oppose her.*]

[*The RAJA does not at first alter his attitude but looks up and listens intently. The curtains shutting off the balcony at the back are violently torn apart by the guard outside, who shout to the RAJA and point upward. Sounds of consternation and terror proceed from the unseen crowd.*]

[*The RAJA goes to the back and looks out. At the same moment LUCILLA and TRAHERNE rush in from the doorway, right.*]

LUCILLA. See! See! They are circling lower and lower! Is it true, Basil? Are we saved?

TRAHERNE. Yes, Lucilla, we are saved.

LUCILLA. Oh, thank God! thank God! I shall see my babies again!

[*She sways, almost fainting. TRAHERNE supports her.*]

RAJA. So the Major lied like a gentleman! Good old Major! I didn't think he had it in him.

[*The Guards call his attention; he looks out from the balcony, and gives an order, then turns down again.*]

One of the machines has landed. An officer is coming this way—he looks a mere boy.

TRAHERNE. The conquerors of the air have all been mere boys.

RAJA. I have given orders that he shall be brought here unharmed. Perhaps I had better receive him with some ceremony.

[*He goes back to the throne and seats himself, cross-legged. At his command the Priests range themselves about him.*]

RAJA. You said just now, Dr. Traherne, that you were saved. Are you so certain of that?

TRAHERNE. Certain.

RAJA. How many men does each of these humming-birds carry?

TRAHERNE. Two or three, but—

RAJA. I counted six planes—say at the outside twenty men. Even my toy army can cope with that number.

[*There is a growing clamour outside. The RAJA gives an order to the Priest at the door, right. He throws it wide open.*]

[*FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT CARDEW saunters in, escorted by three soldiers.*]

RAJA. Who are you, sir?

CARDEW. One moment! [*Crosses to LUCILLA, who holds out both her hands. He takes them cordially but coolly.*]
Mrs. Crespín! I'm very glad we're in time. [*Turns to TRA-*

HERNE.] Dr. Traherne, I presume? [*Shakes hands with him.*] And Major Crespin?

TRAHERNE. Shot while transmitting our message.

CARDEW. I'm so sorry, Mrs. Crespin. [*To TRAHERNE.*] By whom? [*TRAHERNE indicates the RAJA, who has meanwhile watched the scene impassively.*]

RAJA. I am sorry to interrupt these effusions, but—

CARDEW. Who are you, sir?

RAJA. I am the Raja of Rukh. And you?

CARDEW. Flight-Lieutenant Cardew. I have the honour to represent his Majesty, the King-Emperor.

RAJA. The King-Emperor? Who is that, pray? We live so out of the world here, I don't seem to have heard of him.

CARDEW. You will in a minute, Raja, if you don't instantly hand over his subjects.

RAJA. His subjects? Ah, I see you mean the King of England. What terms does his Majesty propose?

CARDEW. We make no terms with cut-throats. [*Looks at his wrist watch.*] If I do not signal your submission within three minutes of our landing—

[*A bomb is heard to fall at some distance. Great consternation among the Priests, etc.*]

RAJA [*unperturbed*]. Ah! bombs!

CARDEW. Precisely.

RAJA. I fancied your Government affected some scruple as to the slaughter of innocent civilians.

CARDEW. There has been no slaughter—as yet. That bomb fell in the ravine, where it could do no harm. So will the next one—

[*Bomb—nearer. Increasing hubbub without.*]

But the third—well if you're wise you'll throw up the sponge, and there won't be a third.

RAJA. Throw up the sponge, Lieutenant—? I didn't quite catch your name?

CARDEW. Cardew.

RAJA. Ah, yes, Lieutenant Cardew. Why on earth should I throw up the sponge? Your comrades up yonder can no doubt massacre quite a number of my subjects—a brave ex-

plot!—but when they've spent their thunderbolts, they'll just have to fly away again—if they can. A bomb may drop on this temple, you say? In that case, you and your friends will escort me—in fragments—to my last abode. Does that prospect allure you? I call your bluff, Lieutenant Cardew.

[*A third bomb—very loud.*]

[*The Priests rush up to the RAJA, and fall before him in panic-stricken supplication, with voluble remonstrances, pointing to the Idol in the background. The RAJA hesitates for a moment, then proceeds:*]

RAJA. My priests, however, have a superstitious dread of these eggs of the Great Roc. They fear injury to the Sacred Image. For myself, I am always averse from bloodshed. You may, if you please, signal to your squadron commander my acceptance of your terms.

CARDEW. I thought you would come to reason. [*Shaking out his flag in preparation for signalling, he hurries across to where the white beam of a searchlight is visible outside the doorway, right. He disappears for a moment.*]

RAJA. This comes of falling behind the times. If I had had anti-aircraft guns—

TRAHERNE. Thank your stars you hadn't!

CARDEW [*returning*]. All clear for the moment, Raja. You have no further *immediate* consequences to fear.

RAJA. What am I to conclude from your emphasis on *immediate*?

CARDEW [*after whispering to TRAHERNE*]. I need scarcely remind you, sir, that you can hand over only the *body* of one of your prisoners.

RAJA. Major Crespín murdered a faithful servant of mine. His death at my hands was a fair act of war.

CARDEW. His Majesty's Government will scarcely view it in that light.

RAJA. His Majesty's Government has today, I believe, taken the lives of three kinsmen of mine. Your side has the best of the transaction by four lives to one.

CARDEW [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Will you assign us an escort through the crowd?

RAJA. Certainly. [*Gives an order to the officer of regulars, who hurries out, right.*] The escort will be here in a moment. [*To LUCILLA and TRAHERNE.*] It only remains for me to speed the parting guest. I hope we may one day renew our acquaintance—Oh, not here! I plainly foresee that I shall have to join the other Kings in Exile. Perhaps we may meet at Homburg or Monte Carlo, and talk over old times. Ah, here is the escort.

[*The escort has formed at the door, right. TRAHERNE, LUCILLA, and CARDEW cross to it, the RAJA following them up.*]

RAJA. Good-bye, dear lady. I lament the Major's end. Perhaps I was hasty; but, you know, "'Tis better to have loved and lost," etc. And oh—Mrs. Crespin! [*As she is going out, LUCILLA looks back at him with horror.*] My love to the children!

[*The Priests and others are all clustered on the balcony, looking at the aeroplanes. The RAJA turns back from the door, lights a cigarette at the brazier, takes a puff, and says:*]

Well, well—she'd probably have been a damned nuisance.

HERNANI

(1830)

BY

VICTOR HUGO

Translated by Mrs. Newton Crosland

CHARACTERS

HERNANI.	DON GARCIA SUAREZ.
DON CARLOS.	DON FRANCISCO.
DON RUY GOMEZ DE SILVA.	DON JUAN DE HARO.
DOÑA SOL DE SILVA.	DON PEDRO GUSMAN DE LARA.
THE KING OF BOHEMIA.	DON GIL TELLEZ GIRON.
THE DUKE OF BAVARIA.	DOÑA JOSEFA DUARTE.
THE DUKE OF GOTH.	JAQUEZ.
THE BARON OF HOHENBOURG.	<i>A Mountaineer.</i>
THE DUKE OF LUTZELBOURG.	<i>A Lady.</i>
DON SANCHE.	<i>First Conspirator.</i>
DON MATIAS.	<i>Second Conspirator.</i>
DON RICARDO.	<i>Third Conspirator.</i>
<i>Conspirators of the Holy League, Germans and Spaniards, Mountaineers, Nobles, Soldiers, Pages, Attendants, etc.</i>	

HERNANI

ACT I.

SCENE.—Saragossa. A chamber. Night: a lamp on the table.

[Enter DOÑA JOSEFA DUARTE, an old woman dressed in black with body of her dress worked in jet in the fashion of Isabella the Catholic. She draws the crimson curtains of the window, and puts some armchairs in order. A knock at a little secret door on the right. She listens. A second knock.]

DOÑA JOSEFA. Can it be he already? [Another knock.]

'Tis indeed,

At th' hidden stairway. [A fourth knock.] I must open quick.

[She opens the concealed door.]

[Enter DON CARLOS, his face muffled in his cloak, and his hat drawn over his brows.]

Good-evening to you, sir!

[She ushers him in. He drops his cloak and reveals a rich dress of silk and velvet in the Castilian style of 1519. She looks at him closely, and recoils astonished.]

What now? — not you, Signor Hernani! Fire! fire! Help, oh, help!

DON CARLOS [seizing her by the arm]. But two words more, duenna, and you die!

[He looks at her intently. She is frightened into silence.]

Is this the room of Doña Sol, betrothed

To her old uncle, Duke de Pastrana?

A very worthy lord he is — senile,

White-hair'd and jealous. Tell me, is it true
 The beauteous Doña loves a smooth-faced youth,
 All whiskerless as yet, and sees him here
 Each night, in spite of envious care? Tell me,
 Am I informed aright?

[*She is silent. He shakes her by the arm.*]

Will you not speak?

DOÑA JOSEFA. You did forbid me, sir, to speak two words.

DON CARLOS. One will suffice. I want a yes, or no.
 Say, is thy mistress Doña Sol de Silva?

DOÑA JOSEFA. Yes, why?

DON CARLOS. No matter why. Just at this hour
 The venerable lover is away?

DOÑA JOSEFA. He is.

DON CARLOS. And she expects the young one now?

DOÑA JOSEFA. Yes.

DON CARLOS. Oh, that I could die!

DOÑA JOSEFA. Yes.

DON CARLOS. Say, duenna,
 Is this the place where they will surely meet?

DOÑA JOSEFA. Yes.

DON CARLOS. Hide me somewhere here.

DOÑA JOSEFA. You?

DON CARLOS. Yes, me.

DOÑA JOSEFA. Why?

DON CARLOS. No matter why.

DOÑA JOSEFA. I hide you here!

DON CARLOS. Yes, here.

DOÑA JOSEFA. No, never!

DON CARLOS [*drawing from his girdle a purse and a dagger*].

Madam, condescend to choose

Between a purse and dagger.

DOÑA JOSEFA [*taking the purse*]. Are you, then,
 The devil?

DON CARLOS. Yes, duenna.

DOÑA JOSEFA [*opening a narrow cupboard in the wall*]. Go

—go in.

DON CARLOS [*examining the cupboard*]. This box!

DOÑA JOSEFA [*shutting up the cupboard*]. If you don't like it, go away.

DON CARLOS [*reopening cupboard*]. And yet! [*Again examining it.*] Is this the stable where you keep

The broom-stick that you ride on? [*He crouches down in the cupboard with difficulty.*]

Oh! Oh! Oh!

DOÑA JOSEFA [*joining her hands and looking ashamed*]. A man here!

DON CARLOS [*from the cupboard, still open*]. And was it a woman, then,

Your mistress here expected?

DOÑA JOSEFA. Heavens! I hear

The step of Doña Sol! Sir, shut the door!

Quick — quick! [*She pushes the cupboard door, which closes.*]

DON CARLOS [*from the closed cupboard*]. Remember, if you breathe a word

You die!

DOÑA JOSEFA [*alone*]. Who is this man? If I cry out,

Gracious! there's none to hear. All are asleep

Within the palace walls — madam and I

Excepted. Pshaw! The other'll come. He wears

A sword; 't his affair. And Heav'n keep us

From powers of hell. [*Weighing the purse in her hand.*] At least no thief is he.

[*Enter DOÑA SOL in white. DOÑA JOSEFA hides the purse.*]

DOÑA SOL. Josefa!

DOÑA JOSEFA. Madam?

DOÑA SOL. I some mischief dread,

For 'tis full time Hernani should be here.

[*Noises of steps at the secret door.*]

He's coming up; go — quick! at once, undo

Ere he has time to knock.

[*JOSEFA opens the little door.*]

[*Enter HERNANI in large cloak and large hat; underneath, costume of mountaineer of Aragon — gray, with a cuirass of leather; a sword, a dagger, and a horn at his girdle.*]

DoÑA SOL [*going to him*]. Hernani! Oh!

HERNANI. Ah, Doña Sol! It is yourself at last
I see — your voice it is I hear. Oh, why
Does cruel fate keep you so far from me?
I have such need of you to help my heart
Forget all else!

DoÑA SOL [*touching his clothes*]. Oh! Heav'ns! Your
cloak is drench'd!

The rain must pour!

HERNANI. I know not.

DoÑA SOL. And the cold —
You must be cold!

HERNANI. I feel it not.

DoÑA SOL. Take off
This cloak, then, pray.

HERNANI. Doña, beloved, tell me,
When night brings happy sleep to you, so pure
And innocent — sleep that half opes your mouth,
Closing your eyes with its light fingertouch —
Does not some angel show how dear you are
To an unhappy man, by all the world
Abandoned and repulsed?

DoÑA SOL. Sir, you are late;
But tell me, are you cold?

HERNANI. Not near to you.
Ah! when the raging fire of jealous love
Burns in the veins, and the true heart is riven
By its own tempest, we feel not the clouds
O'erhead, though storm and lightning they fling forth!

DoÑA SOL. Come, give me now the cloak, and your sword
too.

HERNANI [*his hand on his sword*]. No. 'Tis my other love,
faithful and pure.
The old Duke, Doña Sol, — your promised spouse,
Your uncle, — is he absent now?

DoÑA SOL. Oh, yes;
This hour to us belongs.

HERNANI. And that is all!

Only this hour! And then comes afterwards! —
What matter! For I must forget or die!
Angel! One hour with thee — with whom I would
Spend life, and afterwards eternity!

DoÑA SOL. Hernani!

HERNANI. It is happiness to know
The Duke is absent. I am like a thief
Who forces doors. I enter — see you — rob
An old man of an hour of your sweet voice
And looks. And I am happy, though, no doubt
He would deny me e'en one hour, although
He steals my very life.

DoÑA SOL. Be calm. [*Giving the cloak to the duenna.*]

Josefa!

This wet cloak take and dry it.

[*Exit JOSEFA.*]

[*She seats herself, and makes a sign for HERNANI to
draw near.*]

Now, come here.

HERNANI [*without appearing to hear her*].

The Duke, then, is not in the mansion now?

DoÑA SOL. How grand you look!

HERNANI. He is away?

DoÑA SOL. Dear one,

Let us not think about the Duke.

HERNANI. Madam,

But let us think of him, the grave old man
Who loves you — who will marry you! How now?
He took a kiss from you the other day.
Not think of him!

DoÑA SOL. Is 't that which grieves you thus?

A kiss upon my brow — an uncle's kiss —
Almost a father's.

HERNANI. No, not so; it was

A lover's, husband's, jealous kiss. To him —
To him it is that you will soon belong.
Think'st thou not of it! Oh, the foolish dotard,
With head drooped down to finish out his days!

Wanting a wife, he takes a girl; himself
Most like 'a frozen specter. Sees he not,
The senseless one! that while with one hand he
Espouses you, the other mates with Death!
Yet without shudder comes he 'twixt our hearts!
Seek out the grave-digger, old man, and give
Thy measure. Who is it that makes for you
This marriage? You are forced to it, I hope?

DOÑA SOL. They say the King desires it.

HERNANI. King! This king!

My father on the scaffold died condemned
By his; and, though one may have aged since then, —
For e'en the shadow of that king, his son,
His widow, and for all to him allied,
My hate continues fresh. Him dead, no more
We count with; but while still a child I swore
That I'd avenge my father on his son.
I sought him in all places — Charles the King
Of the Castiles. For hate is rife between
Our families. The fathers wrestled long
And without pity, and without remorse,
For thirty years! Oh, 'tis in vain that they
Are dead; their hatred lives. For them no peace
Has come; their sons keep up the duel still.
Ah! then I find 'tis thou who hast made up
This execrable marriage! Thee I sought —
Thou comest in my way!

DOÑA SOL. You frighten me!

HERNANI. Charged with the mandate of anathema,
I frighten e'en myself; but listen now:
This old, old man, for whom they destine you,
This Ruy de Silva, Duke de Pastrana,
Count and grandee, rich man of Aragon,
In place of youth can give thee, oh! young girl,
Such store of gold and jewels that your brow
Will shine 'mong royalty's own diadems;
And for your rank and wealth, and pride and state,
Queens many will perhaps envy you. See, then,

Just what he is. And now consider me.

My poverty is absolute, I say.

Only the forest, where I ran barefoot

In childhood, did I know. Although perchance

I too can claim illustrious blazonry,

That's dimm'd just now by rusting stain of blood.

Perchance I've rights, though they are shrouded still,

And hid 'neath ebon folds of scaffold cloth,

Yet which, if my attempt one day succeeds,

May, with my sword from out their sheath leap forth.

Meanwhile, from jealous Heaven I've received

But air, and light, and water — gifts bestowed

On all. Now, wish you from the Duke, or me,

To be delivered? You must choose 'twixt us,

Whether you marry him, or follow me.

DOÑA SOL. You, I will follow!

HERNANI. 'Mong companions rude,

Men all proscribed, of whom the headsman knows

The names already. Men whom neither steel

Nor touch of pity softens; each one urged

By some blood feud that's personal. Wilt thou

Then come? They'd call thee mistress of my band,

For know you not that I a bandit am?

When I was hunted throughout Spain, alone

In thickest forests, and on mountains steep,

'Mong rocks which but the soaring eagle spied,

Old Catalonia like a mother proved.

Among her hills — free, poor, and stern — I grew;

And now, to-morrow if this horn should sound,

Three thousand men would rally at the call.

You shudder, and should pause to ponder well.

Think what 't will prove to follow me through woods

And over mountain paths, with comrades like

The fiends that come in dreams! To live in fear,

Suspicious of a sound, of voices, eyes:

To sleep upon the earth, drink at the stream,

And hear at night, while nourishing perchance

Some wakeful babe, the whistling musket balls.

To be a wanderer with me proscribed,
And when my father I shall follow — then,
E'en to the scaffold, you to follow me!

DoÑA SOL. I'll follow you.

HERNANI. The Duke is wealthy, great
And prosperous, without a stain upon
His ancient name. He offers you his hand,
And can give all things — treasures, dignities,
And pleasure —

DoÑA SOL. We'll set out to-morrow. Oh!
Hernani, censure not th' audacity
Of this decision. Are you angel mine
Or demon? Only one thing do I know,
That I'm your slave. Now, listen: wheresoe'er
You go, I go — pause you or move I'm yours.
Why act I thus? Ah! that I cannot tell;
Only I want to see you evermore.
When sound of your receding footstep dies
I feel my heart stops beating; without you
Myself seems absent, but when I detect
Again the step I love, my soul comes back,
I breathe — I live once more.

HERNANI [*embracing her*]. Oh! angel mine!

DoÑA SOL. At midnight, then, to-morrow, clap your hands
Three times beneath my window, bringing there
Your escort. Go! I shall be strong and brave.

HERNANI. Now know you who I am?

DoÑA SOL. Only my lord.
Enough — what matters else? — I follow you.

HERNANI. Not so. Since you, a woman weak, decide
To come with me, 'tis right that you should know
What name, what rank, what soul, perchance what fate
There hides beneath the low Hernani here.
Yes, you have willed to link yourself for aye
With brigand — would you still with outlaw mate?

DON CARLOS [*opening the cupboard*]. When will you finish
this history?

Think you 'tis pleasant in this cupboard hole?

[HERNANI recoils, astonished. DOÑA SOL screams and takes refuge in HERNANI'S arms, looking at DON CARLOS with frightened gaze.]

HERNANI [*his hand on the hilt of his sword*]. Who is this man?

DOÑA SOL. Oh, Heavens, help!

HERNANI. Be still,

My Doña Sol! you'll wake up dangerous eyes.

Never — whatever be — while I am near,

Seek other help than mine.

[*To DON CARLOS.*] What do you here?

DON CARLOS. I? — Well, I am not riding through the wood, That you should ask.

HERNANI. He who affronts, then jeers,
May cause his heir to laugh.

DON CARLOS. Each, sir, in turn.
Let us speak frankly. You the lady love,
And come each night to mirror in her eyes
Your own. I love her, too, and want to know
Who 'tis I have so often seen come in
The window way, while I stand at the door.

HERNANI. Upon my word, I'll send you out the way
I enter.

DON CARLOS. As to that we'll see. My love
I offer unto madam. Shall we, then,
Agree to share it? In her beauteous soul
I've seen so much of tenderness, and love,
And sentiment, that she, I'm very sure,
Has quite enough for ardent lovers twain.
Therefore, to-night, wishing to end suspense
On your account, I forced an entrance, hid,
And — to confess it all — I listened too.
But I heard badly, and was nearly choked;
And then I crumpled my French vest — and so,
By Jove! come out I must!

HERNANI. Likewise my blade
Is not at ease, and hurries to leap out.

DON CARLOS [*bowing*]. Sir, as you please.

HERNANI [*drawing his sword*]. Defend yourself!

[DON CARLOS *draws his sword*.]

DOÑA SOL. Oh, Heaven!

DON CARLOS. Be calm, señora.

HERNANI [*to DON CARLOS*]. Tell me, sir, your name.

DON CARLOS. Tell me yours!

HERNANI. It is a fatal secret,

Kept for my breathing in another's ear,

Some day when I am conqueror, with my knee

Upon his breast, and dagger in his heart.

DON CARLOS. Then tell to me this other's name.

HERNANI. To thee

What matters it? On guard! Defend thyself!

[*They cross swords. DOÑA SOL falls trembling into a chair. They hear knocks at the door.*]

DOÑA SOL [*rising in alarm*]. Oh, Heavens! There's some one knocking at the door!

[*The champions pause.*]

[*Enter JOSEFA, at the little door, in a frightened state.*]

HERNANI [*to JOSEFA*]. Who knocks in this way?

DOÑA JOSEFA [*to DOÑA SOL*]. Madam, a surprise!

An unexpected blow. It is the Duke

Come home.

DOÑA SOL [*clasping her hands*]. The Duke. Then every hope is lost!

DOÑA JOSEFA [*looking round*]. Gracious! — the stranger out! — and swords, and fighting.

Here's a fine business!

[*The two combatants sheathe their swords. DON CARLOS draws his cloak round him, and pulls his hat down on his forehead. More knocking.*]

HERNANI. What is to be done? [*More knocking.*]

A VOICE [*without*]. Doña Sol, open to me.

[*DOÑA JOSEFA is going to the door, when HERNANI stops her.*]

HERNANI. Do not open.

DOÑA JOSEFA [*pulling out her rosary*]. Holy St. James!

Now draw us through this broil! [*More knocking.*]

HERNANI [*pointing to the cupboard*]. Let's hide!

DON CARLOS. What! in the cupboard?

HERNANI. Yes, go in;

I will take care that it shall hold us both.

DON CARLOS. Thanks. No; it is too good a joke.

HERNANI [*pointing to secret door*]. Let's fly

That way.

DON CARLOS. Good-night! But as for me I stay
Here.

HERNANI. Fire and fury, sir, we will be quits
For this.

[*To DOÑA SOL.*] What if I firmly barr'd the door?

DON CARLOS [*to JOSEFA*]. Open the door.

HERNANI. What is it that he says?

DON CARLOS [*to JOSEFA, who hesitates bewildered*]. Open
the door, I say.

[*More knocking. JOSEFA opens the door, trembling.*]

DOÑA SOL. Oh, I shall die!

[*Enter DON RUY GOMEZ DE SILVA, in black; white hair and
beard. Servants with lights.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. My niece with two men at this hour of
night!

Come all! The thing is worth exposing here.

[*To DOÑA SOL.*] Now, by St. John of Avila, I vow

That we three with you, madam, are by two

Too many.

[*To the two young men.*] My young sirs, what do you here?

When we'd the Cid and Bernard — giants both

Of Spain and of the world — they traveled through

Castile protecting women, honoring

Old men. For them steel armor had less weight

Than your fine velvets have for you. These men

Respected whitened beards, and when they loved,

Their love was consecrated by the Church.

Never did such men cozen or betray,

For reason that they had to keep unflawed
The honor of their house. Wished they to wed,
They took a stainless wife in open day,
Before the world, with sword, or axe, or lance
In hand. But as for villains such as you,
Who come at eve, peeping behind them oft,
To steal away the honor of men's wives
In absence of their husbands, I declare,
The Cid, our ancestor, had he but known
Such men, he would have plucked away from them
Nobility usurped, have made them kneel,
While he with flat of sword their blazon dashed.
Behold what were the men of former times
Whom I, with anguish, now compare with these
I see to-day! What do you here? Is it
To say, a white-haired man's but fit for youth
To point at when he passes in the street,
And jeer at there? Shall they so laugh at me,
Tried soldier of Zamora? At the least
Not yours will be that laugh.

HERNANI. But, Duke —

DON RUY GOMEZ. Be still!

What! You have sword and lance, falcons, the chase,
And songs to sing 'neath balconies at night,
Festivals, pleasures, feathers in your hats,
Raiment of silk — balls, youth, and joy of life;
But wearied of them all, at any price
You want a toy, and take an old man for it.
Ah, though you've broke the toy, God wills that it
In bursting should be flung back in your face!
Now follow me!

HERNANI. Most noble Duke —

DON RUY GOMEZ. Follow —

Follow me, sirs. Is this alone a jest?

What! I've a treasure, mine to guard with care,
A young girl's character, a family's fame.
This girl I love — by kinship to me bound,
Pledged soon to change her ring for one from me.

I know her spotless, chaste, and pure. Yet when
I leave my home one hour, I — Ruy Gomez
De Silva — find a thief who steals from me
My honor, glides unto my house. Back, back,
Make clean your hands, oh, base and soulless men,
Whose presence, brushing by, must serve to taint
Our women's fame! But no, 'tis well. Proceed.
Have I not something more?

[*Snatches off his collar.*] Take, tread it now
Beneath your feet. Degrade my Golden Fleece.
[*Throws off his hat.*] Pluck at my hair, insult me every way,
And then, to-morrow through the town make boast
That lowest scoundrels in their vilest sport
Have never shamed a nobler brow, nor soiled
More whitened hair.

DOÑA SOL. My lord —

DON RUY GOMEZ [*to his servants*]. A rescue! grooms!
Bring me my dagger of Toledo, axe,
And dirk.

[*To the young men.*] Now, follow — follow me — ye two.

DON CARLOS [*stepping forward a little*]. Duke, this is not
the pressing thing just now;
First we've to think of Maximilian dead,
The Emperor of Germany. [*Opens his cloak, and shows his
face, previously hidden by his hat.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Jest you!
Heavens, the King!

DOÑA SOL. The King!

HERNANI. The King of Spain!

DON CARLOS [*gravely*]. Yes, Charles, my noble Duke, are
thy wits gone?

The Emperor, my grandsire, is no more.
I knew it not until this eve, and came
At once to tell it you and counsel ask,
Incognito, at night, knowing you well
A loyal subject that I much regard.
The thing is very simple that has caused
This hubbub.

[DON RUY GOMEZ *sends away servants by a sign, and approaches DON CARLOS. DOÑA SOL looks at the King with fear and surprise. HERNANI from a corner regards him with flashing eyes.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. But oh, why was it the door
Was not more quickly opened?

DON CARLOS. Reason good.
Remember all your escort. When it is
A weighty secret of the state I bear
That brings me to your palace, it is not
To tell it to thy servants.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Highness, oh!
Forgive me, some appearances —

DON CARLOS. Good father,
Thee Governor of the Castle of Figuière
I've made. But whom thy governor shall I make?

DON RUY GOMEZ. Oh, pardon —

DON CARLOS. 'Tis enough. We'll say no more
Of this. The Emperor is dead.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Your Highness's
Grandfather dead!

DON CARLOS. Aye! Duke, you see me here
In deep affliction.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Who'll succeed to him?

DON CARLOS. A Duke of Saxony is named. The throne
Francis the First of France aspires to mount.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Where do the Electors of the Empire
meet?

DON CARLOS. They say at Aix-la-Chapelle, or at Spire,
Or Frankfort.

DON RUY GOMEZ. But our King, whom God preserve!
Has he not thought of Empire?

DON CARLOS. Constantly.

DON RUY GOMEZ. To you it should revert.

DON CARLOS. I know it, Duke.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Your father was Archduke of Austria.
I hope 'twill be remembered that you are
Grandson to him, who but just now has changed

Th' imperial purple for a winding-sheet.

DON CARLOS. I am, besides, a citizen of Ghent.

DON RUY GOMEZ. In my own youth your grandfather I saw.

Alas! I am the sole survivor now
Of all that generation past. All dead!
He was an Emperor magnificent
And mighty.

DON CARLOS. Rome is for me.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Valiant, firm,
And not tyrannical, this head might well
Become th' old German body. [*He bends over the King's
hands and kisses them.*]

Yet so young.

I pity you, indeed, thus plunged in such
A sorrow.

DON CARLOS. Ah! the Pope is anxious now
To get back Sicily — the isle that's mine;
'Tis ruled that Sicily cannot belong
Unto an Emperor; therefore it is
That he desires me Emperor to be made;
And then, to follow that, as docile son
I give up Naples too. Let us but have
The Eagle, and we'll see if I allow
Its wings to be thus clipp'd!

DON RUY GOMEZ. What joy 'twould be
For this great veteran of the throne to see
Your brow, so fit, encircled by his crown!
Ah, Highness, we together weep for him,
The Christian Emperor, so good; so great!

DON CARLOS. The Holy Father's clever. He will say —
This isle unto my States should come; 'tis but
A tatter'd rag that scarce belongs to Spain.
What will you do with this ill-shapen isle
That's sewn upon the Empire by a thread?
Your Empire is ill-made; but quick, come here,
The scissors bring, and let us cut away! —
Thanks, Holy Father, but if I have luck

I think that many pieces such as this
Upon the Holy Empire will be sewn!
And if some rags from me are ta'en, I mean
With isles and duchies to replace them all.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Console yourself, for we shall see again
The dead more holy and more great. There is
An Empire of the Just.

DON CARLOS. Francis the First
Is all ambition. The old Emperor dead,
Quick he'll turn wooing. Has he not fair France
Most Christian? 'Tis a place worth holding fast.
Once to King Louis did my grandsire say —
If I were God, and had two sons, I'd make
The elder God, the second, King of France.

[To DON RUY GOMEZ.] Think you that Francis has a chance
to win?

DON RUY GOMEZ. He is a victor.

DON CARLOS. There'd be all to change —
The golden bull doth foreigners exclude.

DON RUY GOMEZ. In a like manner, Highness, you would
be
Accounted King of Spain.

DON CARLOS. But I was born
A citizen of Ghent.

DON RUY GOMEZ. His last campaign
Exalted Francis mightily.

DON CARLOS. The Eagle
That soon perchance upon my helm will gleam
Knows also how to open out its wings.

DON RUY GOMEZ. And knows Your Highness Latin?

DON CARLOS. Ah, not much.

DON RUY GOMEZ. A pity that. The German nobles like
The best those who in Latin speak to them.

DON CARLOS. With haughty Spanish they will be content,
For trust King Charles, 'twill be of small account,
When masterful the voice, what tongue it speaks.
To Flanders I must go. Your King, dear Duke,
Must Emperor return. The King of France

Will stir all means. I must be quick to win.
I shall set out at once.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Do you, then, go,
Oh, Highness, without clearing Aragon
Of those fresh bandits who, among the hills,
Their daring insolence show everywhere?

DON CARLOS. To the Duke D'Arcos I have orders given
That he should quite exterminate the band.

DON RUY GOMEZ. But is the order given to its chief
To let the thing be done?

DON CARLOS. Who is this chief —
His name?

DON RUY GOMEZ. I know not. But the people say
That he's an awkward customer.

DON CARLOS. Pshaw! I know
That now he somewhere in Galicia hides;
With a few soldiers, soon we'll capture him.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Then it was false, the rumor which de-
clared
That he was hereabouts?

DON CARLOS. Quite false. Thou canst
Accommodate me here to-night?

DON RUY GOMEZ [*bowing to the ground*]. Thanks!
Thanks!

Highness! [*He calls his servants.*] You'll do all honor to
the King,

My guest.

[*The servants reënter with lights. The Duke arranges
them in two rows to the door at the back. Mean-
while DOÑA SOL approaches HERNANI softly. The
King observes them.*]

DOÑA SOL [*to HERNANI*]. To-morrow, midnight, without
fail

Beneath my window clap your hands three times.

HERNANI [*softly*]. To-morrow night.

DON CARLOS [*aside*]. To-morrow!

[*Aloud to DOÑA SOL, whom he approaches with politeness.*]

Let me now

Escort you hence, I pray. [*He leads her to the door. She goes out.*]

HERNANI [*his hand in his breast on dagger hilt*]. My dagger true!

DON CARLOS [*coming back, aside*]. Our man here has the look of being trapped. [*He takes HERNANI aside.*]
 I've crossed my sword with yours; that honor, sir,
 I've granted you. For many reasons I
 Suspect you much, but to betray you now
 Would shame the King; go therefore freely. E'en
 I deign to aid your flight.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*coming back, and pointing to HERNANI*].
 This lord — who's he?

DON CARLOS. One of my followers, who'll soon depart.
 [*They go out with servants and lights, the Duke preceding with waxlight in his hand.*]

HERNANI. One of thy followers! I am, O King!
 Well said. For night and day and step by step
 I follow thee, with eye upon thy path
 And dagger in my hand. My race in me
 Pursues thy race in thee. And now, behold
 Thou art my rival! For an instant I
 'Twixt love and hate was balanced in the scale.
 Not large enough my heart for her and thee;
 In loving her oblivious I became
 Of all my hate of thee. But since 'tis thou
 That comes to will I should remember it,
 I recollect. My love it is that tilts
 Th' uncertain balance, while it falls entire
 Upon the side of hate. Thy follower!
 'Tis thou hast said it. Never courtier yet
 Of thy accursed court, or noble, fain
 To kiss thy shadow — not a seneschal
 With human heart abjured in serving thee;
 No dog within the palace, trained the King
 To follow, will thy steps more closely haunt
 And certainly than I. What they would have,
 These famed grandees, is hollow title, or

Some toy that shines — some golden sheep to hang
About the neck. Not such a fool am I.
What I would have is not some favor vain,
But 'tis thy blood, won by my conquering steel —
Thy soul from out thy body forced — with all
That at the bottom of thy heart was reached
After deep delving. Go — you are in front —
I follow thee. My watchful vengeance walks
With me, and whispers in mine ear. Go where
Thou wilt I'm there to listen and to spy,
And noiselessly my step will press on thine.
No day, should'st thou but turn thy head, O King,
But thou wilt find me, motionless and grave,
At festivals; at night, should'st thou look back,
Still wilt thou see my flaming eyes behind.

[*Exit by the little door.*]

ACT II

SCENE.—*Saragossa. A square before the palace of SILVA. On the left the high walls of the palace, with a window and a balcony. Below the window a little door. To the right, at the back, houses of the street. Night. Here and there are a few windows still lit up, shining in the front of the houses.*

[*Enter DON CARLOS, DON SANCHEZ DE ZUÑIGA, COUNT DE MONTEREY, DON MATIAS CENTURION, MARQUIS D'ALMUNAN, DON RICARDO DE ROXAS, LORD OF CASAPALMA, DON CARLOS at the head, hats pulled down, and wrapped in long cloaks, which their swords inside raise up.*]

DON CARLOS [*looking up at the balcony*]. Behold! We're at the balcony — the door.

My heart is bounding. [*Pointing to the window, which is dark.*] Ah, no light as yet. [*He looks at the windows where light shines.*]

Although it shines just where I'd have it not,
While where I wish for light is dark.

DON SANCHE. Your Highness,
Now let us of this traitor speak again.

And you permitted him to go!

DON CARLOS. 'Tis true.

DON MATIAS. And he, perchance, was major of the band.

DON CARLOS. Were he the major or the captain e'en,
No crown'd king ever had a haughtier air.

DON SANCHE. Highness, his name?

DON CARLOS [*his eyes fixed on the window*]. Muñoz —
Fernan — [*With gesture of a man suddenly recol-
lecting.*] A name

In i.

DON SANCHE. Perchance Hernani?

DON CARLOS. Yes.

DON SANCHE. 'Twas he.

DON MATIAS. The chief, Hernani!

DON SANCHE. Cannot you recall

His speech?

DON CARLOS. Oh, I heard nothing in the vile
And wretched cupboard.

DON SANCHE. Wherefore let him slip
When there you had him?

DON CARLOS [*turning round gravely and looking him in the
face*]. Count de Monterey,
You question me!

[*The two nobles step back, and are silent.*]

Besides, it was not he

Was in my mind. It was his mistress, not

His head, I wanted. Madly I'm in love

With two dark eyes, the loveliest in the world,

My friends! Two mirrors, and two rays! two flames!

I heard but of their history these words:

"To-morrow come at midnight." 'Twas enough.

The joke is excellent! For while that he,

The bandit lover, by some murd'rous deed

Some grave to dig, is hindered and delayed,

I softly take his dove from out its nest.

DON RICARDO. Highness, 'twould make the thing far more
complete

If we, the dove in gaining, killed the kite.

DON CARLOS. Count, 'tis most capital advice. Your hand is prompt.

DON RICARDO [*bowing low*]. And by what title will it please
The King that I be count?

DON SANCHE. 'Twas a mistake.

DON RICARDO [*to DON SANCHE*]. The King has called me count.

DON CARLOS. Enough — enough!
[*To DON RICARDO*.] I let the title fall; but pick it up.

DON RICARDO [*bowing again*]. Thanks, Highness.

DON SANCHE. A fine count — count by mistake!

[*The King walks to the back of the stage, watching eagerly the lighted windows. The two lords talk together at the front.*]

DON MATIAS [*to DON SANCHE*]. What think you that the King will do, when once

The beauty's taken?

DON SANCHE [*looking sideways at DON RICARDO*]. Countess she'll be made;

Lady of honor afterwards, and then,
If there's a son, he will be King.

DON MATIAS. How so? —

My lord! a bastard! Let him be a count.

Were one His Highness, would one choose as king
A countess' son?

DON SANCHE. He'd make her marchioness
Ere then, dear marquis.

DON MATIAS. Bastards — they are kept
For conquer'd countries. They for viceroys serve.

[DON CARLOS comes forward.]

DON CARLOS [*looking with vexation at the lighted windows*]. Might one not say they're jealous eyes that watch?

Ah! there are two which darken; we shall do.

Weary the time of expectation seems —

Sirs, who can make it go more quickly?

DON SANCHE. That

Is what we often ask ourselves within
The palace.

DON CARLOS. 'Tis the thing my people say
Again with you.

[*The last window light is extinguished.*] The last light now
is gone.

[*Turning toward the balcony of DOÑA SOL, still
dark.*]

Oh, hateful window! When wilt thou light up?
The night is dark; come, Doña Sol, and shine
Like to a star!

[*To DON RICARDO.*] Is't midnight yet?

DON RICARDO. Almost.

DON CARLOS. Ah! we must finish, for the other one
At any moment may appear.

[*A light appears in DOÑA SOL'S chamber. Her
shadow is seen through the glass.*]

My friends!

A lamp! and she herself seen through the pane!

Never did daybreak charm me as this sight.

Let's hasten with the signal she expects.

We must clap hands three times. An instant more

And you will see her. But our number, perhaps,

Will frighten her. Go, all three out of sight

Beyond there, watching for the man we want.

'Twixt us, my friends, we'll share the loving pair

For me the girl — the brigand is for you.

DON RICARDO. Best thanks.

DON CARLOS. If he appear from ambuscade,
Rush quickly, knock him down, and, while the dupe
Recovers from the blow, it is for me
To carry safely off the darling prize.

We'll laugh anon. But kill him not outright,

He's brave, I own; — killing's a grave affair.

[*The lords bow and go. DON CARLOS waits till they
are quite gone, then claps his hands twice. At the
second time the window opens, and DOÑA SOL ap-
pears on the balcony.*]

DOÑA SOL [*from the balcony*]. Hernani, is that you?

DON CARLOS [*aside*]. The devil! We must
Not parley! [*He claps his hands again.*]

DOÑA SOL. I am coming down. [*She closes the window,
and the light disappears. The next minute the little
door opens, and she comes out, the lamp in her hand,
and a mantle over her shoulders.*]

DOÑA SOL. Hernani!

[DON CARLOS pulls his hat down on his face, and
hurries toward her.]

DOÑA SOL [*letting her lamp fall*]. Heavens! 'Tis not his
footstep!

[*She attempts to go back, but DON CARLOS runs to
her and seizes her by the arm.*]

DON CARLOS. Doña Sol!

DOÑA SOL. 'Tis not his voice! Oh, misery!

DON CARLOS. What voice

Is there that thou could'st hear that would be more
A lover's? It is still a lover here,
And King for one.

DOÑA SOL. The King!

DON CARLOS. Ah! wish, command,
A kingdom waits thy will; for he whom thou
Hast vanquish'd is the King, thy lord — 'tis Charles,
Thy slave!

DOÑA SOL [*trying to escape from him*]. To the rescue!
Help, Hernani! Help!

DON CARLOS. Thy fear is maidenly, and worthy thee.
'Tis not thy bandit — 'tis thy King that holds
Thee now!

DOÑA SOL. Ah, no. The bandit's you. Are you
Not 'shamed? The blush unto my own cheek mounts
For you. Are these the exploits to be noised
Abroad? A woman thus at night to seize!
My bandit's worth a hundred of such kings!
I do declare, if man were born at level
Of his soul, and God made rank proportional
To his heart, he would be king and prince, and you

The robber be!

DON CARLOS [*trying to entice her*]. Madam! —

DOÑA SOL. Do you forget

My father was a count?

DON CARLOS. And you I'll make

A duchess.

DOÑA SOL [*repulsing him*]. Cease! All this is shameful;

— go! [*She retreats a few steps.*]

Nothing, Don Carlos, can there 'twixt us be.

My father for you freely shed his blood.

I am of noble birth, and heedful ever

Of my name's purity. I am too high

To be your concubine — too low to be

Your wife.

DON CARLOS. Princess!

DOÑA SOL. Carry to worthless girls,

King Charles, your vile addresses. Or, if me

You treat insultingly, I'll show you well

That I'm a woman, and a noble dame.

DON CARLOS. Well, then but come, and you shall share my throne,

My name — you shall be Queen and Empress —

DOÑA SOL. No.

It is a snare. Besides, I frankly speak,

Since, Highness, it concerns you. I avow

I'd rather with my king, Hernani, roam,

An outcast from the world and from the law —

Know thirst and hunger, wandering all the year,

Sharing the hardships of his destiny —

Exile and warfare, mourning hours of terror,

Than be an Empress with an Emperor!

DON CARLOS. Oh, happy man is he!

DOÑA SOL. What! poor, proscribed!

DON CARLOS. 'Tis well with him, though poor, proscribed he be,

For he's beloved! — an angel watches him!

I'm desolate. You hate me, then?

DoÑA SOL. I love
You not.

DON CARLOS [*seizing her violently*]. Well, then, it matters
not to me

Whether you love me, or you love me not!
You shall come with me — yes, for that my hand's
The stronger, and I will it! And we'll see
If I for nothing am the King of Spain
And of the Indies!

DoÑA SOL [*struggling*]. Highness! Pity me!
You're King, you only have to choose among
The countesses, the duchesses, the great
Court ladies, all have love prepared to meet
And answer yours; but what has my proscribed
Received from niggard fortune? You possess
Castile and Aragon — Murcia and Léon,
Navarre, and still ten kingdoms more. Flanders,
And India with the mines of gold you own,
An empire without peer, and all so vast
That ne'er the sun sets on it. And when you,
The King, have all, would you take me, poor girl,
From him who has but me alone? [*She throws herself on her
knees. He tries to draw her up.*]

DON CARLOS. Come — come!
I cannot listen. Come with me. I'll give
Of Spain a fourth part unto thee. Say, now,
What wilt thou? Choose.

DoÑA SOL [*struggling in his arms*]. For mine own honor's
sake

I'll only from Your Highness take this dirk. [*She snatches
the poniard from his girdle.*]

Approach me now but by a step!

DON CARLOS. The beauty!

I wonder not she loves a rebel now. [*He makes a step to-
wards her. She raises the dirk.*]

DoÑA SOL. Another step, I kill you — and myself.
[*He retreats again. She turns and cries loudly.*]

Hernani! Oh, Hernani!

DON CARLOS. Peace!

DOÑA SOL. One step,
And all is finished.

DON CARLOS. Madam, to extremes
I'm driven. Yonder there I have three men
To force you — followers of mine.

HERNANI [*coming suddenly behind him*]. But one
You have forgotten.

[*The King turns, and sees HERNANI motionless behind him in the shade, his arms crossed under the long cloak which is wrapped round him, and the brim of his hat raised up. DOÑA SOL makes an exclamation and runs to him.*]

HERNANI [*motionless, his arms still crossed, and his fiery eyes fixed on the King*]. Heaven my witness is,
That far from here it was I wished to seek him.

DOÑA SOL. Hernani! Save me from him.

HERNANI. My dear love,
Fear not.

DON CARLOS. Now, what could all my friends in town
Be doing, thus to let pass by the chief
Of the Bohemians? Ho! Monterey!

HERNANI. Your friends are in the hands of mine just now,
So call not on their powerless swords; for three
That you might claim, sixty to me would come
Each one worth four of yours. So let us now
Our quarrel terminate. What! You have dared
To lay a hand upon this girl! It was
An act of folly, great Castilian King,
And one of cowardice!

DON CARLOS. Sir Bandit, hold!
There must be no reproach from you to me!

HERNANI. He jeers! Oh, I am not a king; but when
A king insults me, and above all jeers,
My anger swells and surges up, and lifts
Me to his height. Take care! When I'm offended,
Men fear far more the reddening of my brow
Than helm of king. Foolhardy, therefore, you

If still you're lured by hope. [*Seizes his arm.*] Know you
what hand

Now grasps you? Listen. 'Twas your father who
Was death of mine. I hate you for it. You
My title and my wealth have taken. You
I hate. And the same woman now we love.
I hate — hate — from my soul's depths you I hate.

DON CARLOS. That's well.

HERNANI. And yet this night my hate was lull'd.
Only one thought, one wish, one want I had —
'Twas Doña Sol! And I, absorbed in love,
Came here to find you daring against her
To strive, with infamous design! You — you,
The man forgot — thus in my pathway placed!
I tell you, King, you are demented! Ah!
King Charles, now see you're taken in the snare
Laid by yourself: and neither flight nor help
For thee is possible. I hold thee fast,
Besieged, alone, surrounded by thy foes,
Bloodthirsty ones, — what wilt thou do?

DON CARLOS [*proudly*]. Dare you
To question me!

HERNANI. Pish! pish! I would not wish
An arm obscure should strike thee. 'Tis not so
My vengeance should have play. 'Tis I alone
Must deal with thee. Therefore defend thyself.

[*He draws his sword.*]

DON CARLOS. I am your lord, the King. Strike! but no
duel.

HERNANI. Highness, thou may'st remember yesterday
Thy sword encountered mine.

DON CARLOS. I yesterday
Could do it. I your name knew not, and you
Were ignorant of my rank. Not so to-day.
You know who I am, I who you are now.

HERNANI. Perchance.

DON CARLOS. No duel. You can murder. Do.

HERNANI. Think you that kings to me are sacred? Come,

Defend thyself.

DON CARLOS. You will assassinate
Me, then?

[HERNANI falls back. The King looks at him with
eagle eyes.]

Ah, bandits, so you dare to think

That your most vile brigades may safely spread

Through towns—ye blood-stained, murderous, miscreant
crew—

But that you'll play at magnanimity!

As if we'd deign th' ennobling of your dirks

By touch of our own swords—we victims duped.

No, crime enthralls you—after you it trails.

Duels with you! Away! and murder me.

[HERNANI, morose and thoughtful, plays for some
instants with the hilt of his sword, then turns
sharply toward the King and snaps the blade on
the pavement.]

HERNANI. Go, then.

[The King half turns toward him and looks at him
haughtily.]

We shall have fitter meetings. Go.

Get thee away.

DON CARLOS. 'Tis well. I go, sir, soon

Unto the ducal palace. I, your King,

Will then employ the magistrate. Is there

Yet put a price upon your head?

HERNANI. Oh, yes.

DON CARLOS. My master, from this day I reckon you
A rebel, trait'rous subject; you I warn.

I will pursue you everywhere, and make

You outlaw from my kingdom.

HERNANI. That I am
Already.

DON CARLOS. That is well.

HERNANI. But France is near
To Spain. There's refuge there.

DON CARLOS. But I shall be

The Emperor of Germany, and you
Under the Empire's ban shall be.

HERNANI. Ah, well!
I still shall have the remnant of the world,
From which to brave you — and with havens safe
O'er which you'll have no power.

DON CARLOS. But when I've gain'd
The world?

HERNANI. Then I shall have the grave.

DON CARLOS. Your plots
So insolent I shall know how to thwart.

HERNANI. Vengeance is lame, and comes with lagging
steps,
But still it comes.

DON CARLOS [*with a half laugh of disdain*]. For touch of
lady whom
The bandit loves!

HERNANI [*with flashing eyes*]. Dost thou remember, King,
I hold thee still? Make me not recollect
O future Roman Cæsar, that despised
I have thee in my all too loyal hand,
And that I only need to close it now
To crush the egg of thy Imperial Eagle!

DON CARLOS. Then do it.

HERNANI. Get away.

[*He takes off his cloak, and throws it on the shoulders of the King.*]

Go, fly, and take
This cloak to shield thee from some knife I fear
Among our ranks.

[*The King wraps himself in the cloak.*] At present safely go,
My thwarted vengeance for myself I keep.
It makes 'gainst every other hand thy life
Secure.

DON CARLOS. And you who've spoken thus to me
Ask not for mercy on some future day.

[*Exit DON CARLOS.*]

DoÑA SOL [*seizing HERNANI's hand*]. Now, let us fly — be quick.

HERNANI. It well becomes

You, loved one, in the trial hour to prove
Thus strong, unchangeable, and willing e'er
To th' end and depth of all to cling to me;
A noble wish, worthy a faithful soul!
But thou, O God, dost see that to accept
The joy that to my cavern she would bring —
The treasure of a beauty that a king
Now covets — and that Doña Sol to me
Should all belong — that she with me should 'bide,
And all our lives be joined — that this should be
Without regret, remorse — it is too late.
The scaffold is too near.

DoÑA SOL. What is't you say?

HERNANI. This king, whom to his face just now I braved
Will punish me for having dared to show
Him mercy. He already, perhaps, has reached
His palace, and is calling round him guards
And servants, his great lords, his headsman —

DoÑA SOL. Heavens!

Hernani! Oh, I shudder. Never mind,
Let us be quick and fly together, then.

HERNANI. Together! No; the hour has passed for that.
Alas! When to my eyes thou didst reveal
Thyself, so good and generous, deigning e'en
To love me with a helpful love, I could
But offer you — I, wretched one! — the hills,
The woods, the torrents, bread of the proscribed,
The bed of turf, all that the forest gives;
Thy pity then emboldened me — but now
To ask of thee to share the scaffold! No,
No, Doña Sol. That is for me alone.

DoÑA SOL. And yet you promised even that!

HERNANI [*falling on his knees*]. Angel!
At this same moment, when perchance from out
The shadow Death approaches, to wind up

All mournfully a life of mournfulness,
I do declare that here a man proscribed,
Enduring trouble great, profound, — and rock'd
In blood-stained cradle, — black as is the gloom
Which spreads o'er all my life, I still declare
I am a happy, to-be-envied man,
For you have loved me, and your love have owned!
For you have whispered blessings on my brow
Accursed!

DOÑA SOL [*leaning over his head*]. Hernani!

HERNANI. Praised be the fate
Sweet and propitious that for me now sets
This flower upon the precipice's brink!
[*Raising himself.*] 'Tis not to you that I am speaking thus;
It is to Heaven that hears, and unto God.

DOÑA SOL. Let me go with you.

HERNANI. Ah, 'twould be a crime
To pluck the flower while falling in the abyss.
Go: I have breathed the perfume — 'tis enough.
Remould your life, by me so sadly marred,
This old man wed; 'tis I release you now,
To darkness I return. Be happy thou —
Be happy and forget.

DOÑA SOL. No, I will have
My portion of thy shroud. I follow thee.
I hang upon thy steps.

HERNANI [*pressing her in his arms*]. Oh, let me go
Alone! Exiled — proscribed — a fearful man

Am I. [*He quits her with a convulsive movement, and is going.*]

DOÑA SOL [*mournfully, and clasping her hands*]. Hernani,
do you fly from me!

HERNANI [*returning*]. Well, then, no, no. You will it,
and I stay.

Behold me! Come into my arms. I'll wait
As long as thou wilt have me. Let us rest,
Forgetting them. [*He seats her on a bench.*]

Be seated on this stone. [*He places himself at her feet.*]

The liquid light of your eyes inundates
 Mine own. Sing me some song, such as sometimes
 You used at eve to warble, with the tears
 In those dark orbs. Let us be happy now,
 And drink; the cup is full. This hour is ours,
 The rest is only folly. Speak and say,
 Enrapture me. Is it not sweet to love,
 And know that he who kneels before you loves?
 To be but two alone? Is it not sweet
 To speak of love in stillness of the night
 When Nature rests? Oh, let me slumber now,
 And on thy bosom dream. Oh, Doña Sol,
 My love, my darling!

[*Noise of bells in the distance.*]

DoÑA SOL [*starting up frightened*]. Tocsin! — dost thou hear?

The tocsin!

HERNANI [*still kneeling at her feet*]. Eh! No, 'tis our bridal bell

They're ringing.

[*The noises increases. Confused cries. Lights at all the windows, on the roofs, and in the streets.*]

DoÑA SOL. Rise — oh, fly — great God! the town Lights up!

HERNANI [*half rising*]. A torchlight wedding for us 'tis!

DoÑA SOL. The nuptials these of Death, and of the tombs!

[*Noise of swords and cries.*]

HERNANI [*lying down on the stone bench*]. Let us to sleep again.

A MOUNTAINEER [*rushing in, sword in hand*]. The runners, sir.

The alcaldes rush out in cavalcades

With mighty force. Be quick — my Captain, — quick.

[*HERNANI rises.*]

DoÑA SOL [*pale*]. Ah, thou wert right!

THE MOUNTAINEER. Oh, help us!

HERNANI [*to Mountaineer*]. It is well — I'm ready.

[*Confused cries outside.*] Death to the bandit!

HERNANI [*to Mountaineer*]. Quick, thy sword —
[*To DOÑA SOL*]. Farewell!

DOÑA SOL. 'Tis I have been thy ruin! Oh,
Where canst thou go?

[*Pointing to the little door.*] The door is free. Let us
Escape that way.

HERNANI. Heavens! Desert my friends!
What dost thou say?

DOÑA SOL. These clamors terrify.
Remember, if thou diest I must die.

HERNANI [*holding her in his arms*]. A kiss!

DOÑA SOL. Hernani! Husband! Master mine!

HERNANI [*kissing her forehead*]. Alas! it is the first!

DOÑA SOL. Perchance the last!

[*Exit HERNANI. She falls on the bench.*]

ACT III

SCENE.—*The Castle of Silva in the midst of the mountains of Aragon. The gallery of family portraits of Silva; a great hall of which these portraits — surrounded with rich frames, and surmounted by ducal coronets and gilt escutcheons — form the decoration. At the back a lofty Gothic door. Between the portraits complete panoplies of armor of different centuries.*

[*DOÑA SOL, pale, and standing near a table. DON RUY*

GOMEZ DE SILVA, seated in his great carved oak chair.]

DON RUY GOMEZ. At last the day has come! — and in an hour

Thou'lt be my duchess, and embrace me! Not
Thine uncle then! But hast thou pardoned me?
That I was wrong I own. I raised thy blush,
I made thy cheek turn pale. I was too quick
With my suspicions — should have stayed to hear
Before condemning; but appearances
Should take the blame. Unjust we were. Certes
The two young handsome men were there. But then —

No matter — well I know that I should not
Have credited my eyes. But, my poor child,
What would'st thou with the old?

DoÑA SOL [*seriously, and without moving*]. You ever talk
Of this. Who is there blames you?

DON RUY GOMEZ. I myself,
I should have known that such a soul as yours
Never has gallants; when 'tis Doña Sol,
And when good Spanish blood is in her veins.

DoÑA SOL. Truly, my Lord, 'tis good and pure; perchance
'Twill soon be seen.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*rising, and going toward her*]. Now
list. One cannot be
The master of himself, so much in love
As I am now with thee. And I am old
And jealous, and am cross — and why? Because
I'm old; because the beauty, grace, or youth
Of others frightens, threatens me. Because,
While jealous thus of others, of myself
I am ashamed. What mockery! that this love
Which to the heart brings back such joy and warmth,
Should halt, and but rejuvenate the soul,
Forgetful of the body. When I see
A youthful peasant, singing blithe and gay,
In the green meadows, often then I muse —
I, in my dismal paths, and murmur low:
Oh, I would give my battlemented towers,
And ancient ducal donjon, and my fields
Of corn, and all my forest lands, and flocks
So vast which feed upon my hills, my name
And all my ancient titles — ruins mine,
And ancestors who must expect me soon,
All — all I'd give for his new cot, and brow
Unwrinkled. For his hair is raven black,
And his eyes shine like yours. Beholding him
You might exclaim: A young man this! And then
Would think of me so old. I know it well.
I am named Silva. Ah, but that is not

Enough; I say it, see it. Now behold
To what excess I love thee. All I'd give
Could I be like thee — young and handsome now!
Vain dream! that I were young again, who must
By long, long years precede thee to the tomb.

DOÑA SOL. Who knows?

DON RUY GOMEZ. And yet, I pray you, me believe,
The frivolous swains have not so much of love
Within their hearts as on their tongues. A girl
May love and trust one; if she dies for him,
He laughs. The strong-winged and gay-painted birds
That warble sweet, and in the thicket trill,
Will change their loves as they their plumage moult.
They are the old, with voice and color gone,
And beauty fled, who have the resting wings
We love the best. Our steps are slow, and dim
Our eyes. Our brows are furrowed, — but the heart
Is never wrinkled. When an old man loves
He should be spared. The heart is ever young,
And always it can bleed. This love of mine
Is not a plaything made of glass to shake
And break. It is a love severe and sure,
Solid, profound, paternal, — strong as is
The oak which forms my ducal chair. See, then,
How well I love thee — and in other ways
I love thee — hundred other ways, e'en as
We love the dawn, and flowers, and heaven's blue!
To see thee, mark thy graceful step each day,
Thy forehead pure, thy brightly beaming eye,
I'm joyous — feeling that my soul will have
Perpetual festival!

. . . . Such a day as this
Sacred and joyous is. And, by-the-bye,
Time summons us. Are you not ready yet
For chapel when we're called? Be quick to don
The bridal dress. Each moment do I count.

DOÑA SOL. There is abundant time.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Oh, no, there's not.

[*Enter a Page.*]

What want you?

THE PAGE. At the door, my lord, a man —
A pilgrim — beggar — or I know not what,
Is craving here a shelter.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Let him in
Whoever he may be. Good enters with
The stranger that we welcome. What's the news
From th' outside world? What of the bandit chief
That filled our forests with his rebel band?

THE PAGE. Hernani, Lion of the mountains, now
Is done for.

DOÑA SOL [*aside*]. God!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*to the Page*]. How so?

THE PAGE. The troop's destroyed.
The King himself has led the soldiers on.
Hernani's head a thousand crowns is worth
Upon the spot; but now he's dead, they say.

DOÑA SOL [*aside*]. What! Without me, Hernani!

DON RUY GOMEZ. And thank Heaven!
So he is dead, the rebel! Now, dear love,
We can rejoice; go then and deck thyself,
My pride, my darling. Day of double joy.

DOÑA SOL. Oh, mourning robes! [*Exit DOÑA SOL.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*to the Page*]. The casket quickly send
That I'm to give her. [*He seats himself in his chair.*]

'Tis my longing now
To see her all adorned and Madonna like.
With her bright eyes, and aid of my rich gems,
She will be beautiful enough to make
A pilgrim kneel before her. As for him
Who asks asylum, bid him enter here,
Excuses from us offer; run, be quick.

[*The Page bows and exits.*]

'Tis ill to keep a guest long waiting thus.

[*The door at the back opens.*]

[HERNANI appears disguised as a Pilgrim. The Duke rises.

HERNANI pauses at the threshold of the door.]

HERNANI. My lord, peace and all happiness be yours!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*saluting him with his hand*]. To thee
be peace and happiness, my guest!

[HERNANI *enters*. *The Duke reseats himself*.]

Art thou a pilgrim?

HERNANI [*bowing*]. Yes.

DON RUY GOMEZ. No doubt you come
From Armillas?

HERNANI. Not so. I hither came
By other road, there was some fighting there.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Among the troop of bandits, was it not?

HERNANI. I know not.

DON RUY GOMEZ. What's become of him — the chief
They call Hernani? Dost thou know?

HERNANI. My lord,
Who is this man?

DON RUY GOMEZ. Dost thou not know him, then?
For thee so much the worse! Thou wilt not gain
The good round sum. See you a rebel he
That has been long unpunished. To Madrid
Should you be going, perhaps you'll see him hanged.

HERNANI. I go not there.

DON RUY GOMEZ. A price is on his head
For any man who takes him.

HERNANI [*aside*]. Let one come!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Whither, good pilgrim, goest thou?

HERNANI. My lord,
I'm bound for Saragossa.

DON RUY GOMEZ. A vow made
In honor of a saint, or of Our Lady?

HERNANI. Yes, of Our Lady, Duke.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Of the Pillar?

HERNANI. Of the Pillar.

DON RUY GOMEZ. We must be soulless quite
Not to acquit us of the vows we make
Unto the saints. But thine accomplished, then
Hast thou not other purposes in view?
Or is to see the Pillar all you wish?

HERNANI. Yes. I would see the lights and candles burn,
And at the end of the dim corridor
Our Lady in her glowing shrine, with cope
All golden — then would satisfied return.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Indeed, that's well.

Brother, what is thy name?

Mine, Ruy de Silva is.

HERNANI [*hesitating*]. My name —

DON RUY GOMEZ. You can

Conceal it if you will. None here has right
To know it. Cam'st thou to asylum ask?

HERNANI. Yes, Duke.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Remain, and know thou'rt welcome
here.

For nothing want; and as for what thou'rt named,
But call thyself my guest. It is enough
Whoever thou may'st be. Without demur
I'd take in Satan if God sent him me.

[*The folding doors at the back open.*]

[*Enter DOÑA SOL in nuptial attire. Behind her Pages and Lackeys, and two women carrying on a velvet cushion a casket of engraved silver, which they place upon a table, and which contains a jewel case, with duchess' coronet, necklaces, bracelets, pearls, and diamonds in profusion.*]

HERNANI, breathless and scared, looks at DOÑA SOL with
flaming eyes without listening to the Duke.]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*continuing*]. Behold my blessed Lady
— to have prayed

To her will bring thee happiness. [*He offers his hand to*
DOÑA SOL, still pale and grave.]

Come, then,

My bride. What! not thy coronet, nor ring!

HERNANI [*in a voice of thunder*]. Who wishes now a
thousand golden crowns

To win?

[*All turn to him astonished. He tears off his pilgrim's robe, and crushes it under his feet, revealing himself in the dress of a mountaineer.*]

I am Hernani.

DOÑA SOL [*joyfully*]. Heavens! Oh,
He lives!

HERNANI [*to the Lackeys*]. See! I'm the man they seek.
[*To the Duke.*] You wished
To know my name — Diego or Perez?
No, no! I have a grander name — Hernani.
Name of the banished, the proscribed. See you
This head? 'Tis worth enough of gold to pay
For festival.

[*To the Lackeys.*] I give it to you all.
Take; tie my hands, my feet. But there's no need,
The chain that binds me's one I shall not break.

DOÑA SOL [*aside*]. Oh, misery!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Folly! This my guest is mad —
A lunatic!

HERNANI. Your guest a bandit is.

DOÑA SOL. Oh, do not heed him.

HERNANI. What I say is truth.

DON RUY GOMEZ. A thousand golden crowns — the sum
is large.

And, sir, I will not answer now for all
My people.

HERNANI. And so much the better, should
A willing one be found.

[*To the Lackeys.*] Now seize, and sell me!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*trying to silence him*]. Be quiet, or
they'll take you at your word.

HERNANI. Friends, this your opportunity is good.
I tell you, I'm the rebel — the proscribed
Hernani!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Silence!

HERNANI. I am he!

DOÑA SOL [*in a low voice to him*]. Be still!

HERNANI [*half turning to Doña Sol*]. There's marrying
here! My spouse awaits me too.

[*To the Duke.*] She is less beautiful, my lord, than yours,
But not less faithful. She is Death.

[*To the Lackeys.*] Not one
Of you has yet come forth!

DOÑA SOL [*in a low voice*]. For pity's sake!

HERNANI [*to the Lackeys*]. A thousand golden crowns.
Hernani here!

DON RUY GOMEZ. This is the demon!

HERNANI [*to a young Lackey*]. Come! thou'lt earn this
sum,

Then rich, thou wilt from lackey change again
To man.

[*To the other Lackeys, who do not stir.*] And also you —
you waver. Ah,
Have I not misery enough?

DON RUY GOMEZ. My friend,
To touch thy life they'd peril each his own.
Wert thou Hernani, or a hundred times
As bad, I must protect my guest, — were e'en
An Empire offered for his life — against
The King himself; for thee I hold from God.
If hair of thine be injured, may I die.

[*To DOÑA SOL.*] My niece, who in an hour will be my wife,
Go to your room. I am about to arm

The Castle — shut the gates. [*Exit, followed by servants.*]

HERNANI [*looking with despair at his empty girdle*]. Not
e'en a knife!

[*DOÑA SOL, after the departure of the Duke, takes a few steps, as if to follow her women, then pauses, and when they are gone, comes back to HERNANI with anxiety. HERNANI looks at the nuptial jewel-case with a cold and apparently indifferent gaze; then he tosses back his head, and his eyes light up.*]

Accept my 'gratulations! Words tell not
How I'm enchanted by these ornaments. [*He approaches the casket.*]

This ring is in fine taste, — the coronet
I like, — the necklace shows surpassing skill.
The bracelet's rare — but oh, a hundred times

Less so than she, who 'neath a forehead pure
Conceals a faithless heart. [*Examining the casket again.*]
What for all this

Have you now given? Of your love some share?
But that for nothing goes! Great God! to thus
Deceive, and still to live and have no shame!

[*Looking at the jewels.*]

But after all, perchance, this pearl is false,
And copper stands for gold, and glass and lead
Make out sham diamonds — pretended gems!
Are these false sapphires and false jewels all?
If so, thy heart is like them, Duchess false,
Thyself but only gilded. [*He returns to the casket.*] Yet
no, no!

They all are real, beautiful, and good,
He dares not cheat, who stands so near the tomb.
Nothing is wanting. [*He takes up one thing after another.*]
Necklaces are here,
And brilliant earrings, and the Duchess' crown
And golden ring. Oh, marvel! Many thanks
For love so certain, faithful, and profound.
The precious box!

DOÑA SOL [*going to the casket, feeling in it, and drawing forth a dagger*]. You have not reached its depths.
This is the dagger which, by kindly aid
Of patron saint, I snatched from Charles the King
When he made offer to me of a throne. . . .

HERNANI [*falling at her feet*]. Oh, let me on my knees arrest those tears,

The tears that beautify thy sorrowing eyes. . . .

DOÑA SOL. I pardon you, Hernani. In my heart
There is but love for you.

HERNANI. And she forgives —
And loves me still! But who can also teach
Me to forgive myself, that I have used
Such words? Angel, for heaven reserved, say where
You trod, that I may kiss the ground.

DOÑA SOL. My love!

HERNANI. Oh, no, I should to thee be odious.
But listen. Say again — I love thee still!
Say it, and reassure a heart that doubts.
Say it, for often with such little words
A woman's tongue hath cured a world of woes.

DOÑA SOL [*absorbed, and without hearing him*]. To think
my love had such short memory!
That all these so ignoble men could shrink
A heart, where his name was enthroned, to love
By them thought worthier.

HERNANI. Alas! I have
Blasphemed! If I were in thy place I should
Be weary of the furious madman, who
Can only pity after he has struck.
I'd bid him go. Drive me away, I say,
And I will bless thee, for thou hast been good
And sweet. Too long thou hast myself endured,
For I am evil; I should blacken still
Thy days with my dark nights. At last it is
Too much; thy soul is lofty, beautiful,
And pure; if I am evil, is't thy fault?
Marry the old Duke, then, for he is good
And noble. By the mother's side he has
Olmédo, by his father's Alcala.
With him be rich and happy by one act.
Know you not what this generous hand of mine
Can offer thee of splendor? Ah, alone
A dowry of misfortune, and the choice
Of blood or tears. Exile, captivity,
And death, and terrors that environ me.
These are thy necklaces and jeweled crown.
Never elated bridegroom to his bride
Offered a casket filled more lavishly,
But 'tis with misery and mournfulness.
Marry the old man — he deserves thee well!
Ah, who could ever think my head proscribed
Fit mate for forehead pure? What looker-on
That saw thee calm and beautiful, me rash

And violent — thee peaceful, like a flower
Growing in shelter, me by tempests dash'd
On rocks unnumber'd — who could dare to say
That the same law should guide our destinies?
No, God, who ruleth all things well, did not
Make thee for me. No right from Heav'n above
Have I to thee; and I'm resigned to fate.
I have thy heart; it is a theft! I now
Unto a worthier yield it. Never yet
Upon our love has Heaven smiled; 'tis false
If I have said thy destiny it was.
To vengeance and to love I bid adieu!
My life is ending; useless I will go,
And take away with me my double dream,
Ashamed I could not punish, nor could charm.
I have been made for hate, who only wished
To love. Forgive and fly me, these my prayers
Reject them not, since they will be my last.
Thou livest — I am dead. I see not why
Thou should'st immure thee in my tomb.

DOÑA SOL. Ingrate!

HERNANI. Mountains of old Aragon! Galicia!
Estremadura! Unto all who come
Around me I bring misery!
The best, without remorse I've ta'en to fight,
And now behold them dead! The bravest brave
Of all Spain's sons, lie, soldier-like, upon
The hills, their backs to earth, the living God
Before; and if their eyes could ope they'd look
On heaven's blue. See what I do to all
Who join me! Is it fortune any one
Should covet? Doña Sol, oh! take the Duke,
Take hell, or take the King — all would be well,
All must be better than myself, I say.
No longer have I friend to think of me,
And it is fully time that thy turn comes,
For I must be alone. Fly from me, then,
From my contagion. Make not faithful love

A duty of religion! Fly from me,
For pity's sake. Thou think'st me, perhaps, a man
Like others, one with sense, who knows the end
At which he aims, and acts accordingly.
Oh, undeceive thyself. I am a force
That cannot be resisted — agent blind
And deaf of mournful mysteries! A soul
Of misery made of gloom. Where shall I go?
I cannot tell. But I am urged, compelled
By an impetuous breath and wild decree;
I fall, and fall, and cannot stop descent.
If sometimes breathless I dare turn my head,
A voice cries out, "Go on!" and the abyss
Is deep, and to the depths I see it red
With flame or blood! Around my fearful course
All things break up — all die. Woe be to them
Who touch me. Fly, I say! Turn thee away
From my so fatal path. Alas! without
Intending I should do thee ill.

DoÑA SOL. Great God!

HERNANI. My demon is a formidable one.
But there's a thing impossible to it —
My happiness. For thee is happiness.
Therefore, go seek another lord, for thou
Art not for me. If Heaven, that my fate
Abjures, should smile on me, believe it not:
It would be irony. Marry the Duke!

DoÑA SOL. 'Twas not enough to tear my heart, but you
Must break it now! Ah me! no longer, then
You love me!

HERNANI. Oh! my heart — its very life
Thou art! The glowing hearth whence all warmth comes
Art thou! Wilt thou, then, blame me that I fly
From thee, adored one?

DoÑA SOL. No, I blame thee not,
Only I know that I shall die of it.

HERNANI. Die! And for what? For me? Can it then be

That thou should'st die for cause so small?

DOÑA SOL [*bursting into tears*]. Enough. [*She falls into a chair.*]

HERNANI [*seating himself near her*]. And thou art weeping; and 'tis still my fault!

And who will punish me? for thou I know
Wilt pardon still! Who, who can tell thee half
The anguish that I suffer when a tear
Of thine obscures and drowns those radiant eyes
Whose luster is my joy. My friends are dead!
Oh, I am crazed — forgive me — I would love
I know not how. Alas! I love with love
Profound. Weep not — the rather let us die!
Oh that I had a world to give to thee!
Oh, wretched, miserable man I am!

DOÑA SOL [*throwing herself on his neck*]. You are my lion, generous and superb!

I love you.

HERNANI. Ah, this love would be a good
Supreme, if we could die of too much love!

DOÑA SOL. Thou art my lord! I love thee and belong
To thee!

HERNANI [*letting his head fall on her shoulder*]. How
sweet would be a poniard stroke
From thee!

DOÑA SOL [*entreatingly*]. Fear you not God will punish
you

For words like these?

HERNANI [*still leaning on her shoulder*]. Well, then, let
Him unite us!

I have resisted; thou would'st have it thus.

[*While they are in each other's arms, absorbed and gazing with ecstasy at each other, DON RUY GOMEZ enters by the door at the back of the stage. He sees them, and stops on the threshold as if petrified.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*motionless on the threshold, with arms crossed*]. And this is the requital that I find
Of hospitality!

DOÑA SOL. Oh, Heavens—the Duke!

[*Both turn as if awakening with a start.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*still motionless*]. This then's the recompense from thee, my guest?

Good Duke, go see if all thy walls be high,
And if the door is closed, and archer placed
Within his tower, and go the castle round
Thyself for us; seek in thine arsenal
For armor that will fit—at sixty years
Resume thy battle-harness—and then see
The loyalty with which we will repay
Such service! Thou for us do thus, and we
Do this for thee!

HERNANI [*rising*]. Duke—

DON RUY GOMEZ. Silence!

[*He makes three steps into the hall looking at the portrait of the SILVAS.*]

Sacred dead!

My ancestors! Ye men of steel, who know
What springs from heav'n or hell, reveal, I say,
Who is this man? No, not Hernani he,
But Judas is his name—oh, try to speak!

HERNANI. Ruy Gomez de Silva, if ever 'neath
The heavens clear a noble brow was raised,
If ever heart was great and soul was high,
Yours are, my lord; and oh, my noble host,
I, who now speak to you, alone have sinn'd.
Guilty most damnably am I, without
Extenuating word to say. I would
Have carried off thy bride—dishonor'd thee.
'Twas infamous. I live; but now my life
I offer unto thee. Take it. Thy sword

Then wipe, and think no more about the deed.

DOÑA SOL. My lord, 'twas not his fault—strike only me.

HERNANI. Be silent, Doña Sol. This hour supreme
Belongs alone to me; nothing I have
But it. Let me explain things to the Duke.
Oh, Duke, believe the last words from my mouth,
I swear that I alone am guilty. But
Be calm and rest assured that she is pure,
That's all. I guilty and she pure. Have faith
In her. A sword or dagger thrust for me.
Then throw my body out of doors, and have
The flooring washed, if you should will it so.
What matter?

DOÑA SOL. Ah! I only am the cause
Of all; because I love him.

[DON RUY turns round trembling at these words,
and fixes on DOÑA SOL a terrible look. She throws
herself at his feet.]

Pardon! Yes,
My lord, I love him!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Love him—you love him.

[To HERNANI.] Tremble! [Noise of trumpets outside.]

[Enter a Page.]

What is this noise?

THE PAGE. It is the King,
My lord, in person, with a band complete
Of archers, and his herald, who now sounds.

DOÑA SOL. Oh, God! This last fatality—the King!

THE PAGE [to the Duke]. He asks the reason why the door
is closed,

And order gives to open it.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Admit.

The King. [The Page bows and exits.]

DOÑA SOL. He's lost!

[DON RUY GOMEZ goes to one of the portraits — that
of himself and the last on the left; he presses a
spring, and the portrait opens out like a door, and

reveals a hiding-place in the wall. He turns to
HERNANI.]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Come hither, sir.

HERNANI. My life

To thee is forfeit; and to yield it up

I'm ready. I thy prisoner am. [*He enters the recess. DON*

RUY again presses the spring, and the portrait springs back to its place looking as before.]

DOÑA SOL. My lord,

Have pity on him!

THE PAGE [*entering*]. His Highness the King!

[*DOÑA SOL hurriedly lowers her veil. The folding-doors open.*]

[*Enter DON CARLOS in military attire, followed by a crowd of gentlemen equally armed with halberds, arquebuses, and cross-bows. DON CARLOS advances slowly, his left hand on the hilt of his sword, his right hand in his bosom, and looking at the Duke with anger and defiance. The Duke goes before the King and bows low. Silence. Expectation and terror on all. At last the King, coming opposite the Duke, throws back his head haughtily.*]

DON CARLOS. How comes it, then, my cousin, that to-day
Thy door is strongly barr'd? By all the saints
I thought your dagger had more rusty grown,
And know not why, when I'm your visitor,
It should so haste to brightly shine again
All ready to your hand.

[*DON RUY GOMEZ attempts to speak, but the King continues with an imperious gesture.*]

Late in the day

It is for you to play the young man's part

Do we come turban'd? Tell me, are we named

Boabdil or Mahomet, and not Charles,

That the portcullis 'gainst us you should lower

And raise the drawbridge?

DON RUY GOMEZ [*bowing*]. Highness—

DON CARLOS [*to his gentlemen*]. Take the keys
And guard the doors.

[*Two officers exeunt. Several others arrange the soldiers in a triple line in the hall from the King to the principal door. DON CARLOS turns again to the Duke.*]

Ah! you would wake to life
Again these crushed rebellions. By my faith,
If you, ye dukes, assume such airs as these
The King himself will play his kingly part,
Traverse the mountains in a warlike mode,
And in their battlemented nests will slay
The lordlings!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*drawing himself up*]. Ever have the
Silvas been,
Your Highness, loyal.

DON CARLOS [*interrupting him*]. Without subterfuge
Reply, or to the ground I'll raze thy towers
Eleven! Of extinguished fire remains
One spark — of brigands dead the chief survives,
And who conceals him? It is thou, I say!
Hernani, rebel ringleader, is here,
And in thy castle thou dost hide him now.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Highness, it is quite true.

DON CARLOS. Well, then, his head
I want — or if not, thine. Dost understand,
My cousin?

DON RUY GOMEZ. Well, then, be it so. You shall
Be satisfied.

[*Doña Sol hides her face in her hands and sinks into the armchair.*]

DON CARLOS [*a little softened*]. Ah! you repent. Go seek
Your prisoner.

[*The Duke crosses his arms, lowers his head, and remains some moments pondering. The King and Doña Sol, agitated by contrary emotions, observe him in silence. At last the Duke looks up, goes to the King, takes his hand, and leads him with*

slow steps toward the oldest of the portraits, which is where the gallery commences to the right of the spectator.]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*pointing out the old portrait to the King*].

This is the eldest one,
The great forefather of the Silva race,
Don Silvius our ancestor, three times
Was he made Roman consul.

[*Passing to the next portrait.*] This is he —

Don Galceran de Silva — other Cid!
They keep his body still at Toro, near
Valladolid; a thousand candles burn
Before his gilded shrine. 'Twas he who freed
Leon from tribute o' the hundred virgins.

[*Passing to another.*] Don Blas — who, in contrition for the
fault

Of having ill-advised the king, exiled
Himself of his own will. [*To another.*] This Christoval!

At fight of Escalon, when fled on foot
The King Don Sancho, whose white plume was mark
For general deadly aim, he cried aloud,
Oh, Christoval! And Christoval assumed
The plume, and gave his horse.

[*To another.*] This is Don Jore,
Who paid the ransom of Ramire.

[*At an angry gesture of the King he passes by a great number portraits, and speedily comes to the three last at the left of the audience.*]

And this,

My grandfather, who lived to sixty years,
Keeping his promised word even to Jews.

[*To the last portrait but one.*] This venerable form my
father is.

[DON RUY GOMEZ bows low before the King, takes his hand, and leads him to the last portrait, which

*serves for the door of HERNANI'S hiding-place.
DOÑA SOL watches him with anxious eyes. Silence
and expectation in all.]*

DON RUY GOMEZ. This portrait is my own. Mercy! King Charles!

For you require that those who see it here
Should say, "This last, the worthy son of race
Heroic, was a traitor found, that sold
The life of one he sheltered as a guest!"

*[Joy of DOÑA SOL. Movement of bewilderment in
the crowd. The King, disconcerted, moves away
in anger, and remains some moments with lips
trembling and eyes flashing.]*

DON CARLOS. Your castle, Duke, annoys me, I shall lay
It low.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Thus, Highness, you'd retaliate,
Is it not so?

DON CARLOS. For such audacity
Your towers I'll level with the ground, and have
Upon the spot the hemp-seed sown.

DON RUY GOMEZ. I'd see
The hemp spring freely up where once my towers
Stood high, rather than stain should eat into
The ancient name of Silva.

[To the portraits.] Is't not true?
I ask it of you all.

DON CARLOS. Now, Duke, this head,
'Tis ours, and thou hast promised it to me.

DON RUY GOMEZ. I promised one or other.
[To the portraits.] Was't not so?
I ask you all?

[Pointing to his head.] This one I give. *[To the King.]*
Take it.

DON CARLOS. Duke, many thanks; but 'twould not do.
The head

I want is young; when dead the headsman must
Uplift it by the hair. But as for thine,
In vain he'd seek, for thou hast not enough

For him to clutch.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Highness, insult me not.
My head is noble still, and worth far more
Than any rebel's poll. The head of Silva
You thus despise!

DON CARLOS. Give up Hernani!

DON RUY GOMEZ. I
Have spoken, Highness.

DON CARLOS [*to his followers*]. Search you everywhere
From roof to cellar, that he takes not wing —

DON RUY GOMEZ. My keep is faithful as myself; alone
It shares the secret which we both shall guard
Right well.

DON CARLOS. I am the King!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Out of my house
Demolished stone by stone, they'll only make
My tomb, — and nothing gain.

DON CARLOS. Menace I find
And prayer alike are vain. Deliver up
The bandit, Duke, or head and castle both
Will I beat down.

DON RUY GOMEZ. I've said my word.

DON CARLOS. Well, then,
Instead of one head I'll have two.
[*To the DUKE D'ALCALA.*] You, Jorge,
Arrest the Duke.

DOÑA SOL [*plucking off her veil and throwing herself be-
tween the King, the Duke, and the Guards*]. King
Charles, an evil king.

Are you!

DON CARLOS. Good Heavens! Is it Doña Sol
I see?

DOÑA SOL. Highness! Thou hast no Spaniard's heart!

DON CARLOS [*confused*]. Madam, you are severe upon
the King. [*He approaches her, and speaks low.*]

'Tis you have caused the wrath that's in my heart.
A man approaching you perforce becomes
An angel or a monster. Ah, when we

Are hated, swiftly we malignant grow!
Perchance, if you had willed it so, young girl,
I'd noble been — the lion of Castile;
A tiger I am made by your disdain.
You hear it roaring now. Madam, be still!

[DoÑA SOL looks at him. He bows.]

However, I'll obey. [Turning to the Duke.]

Cousin, may be

Thy scruples are excusable, and I
Esteem thee. To thy guest be faithful still,
And faithless to thy King. I pardon thee.
'Tis better that I only take thy niece
Away as hostage.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Only!

DoÑA SOL. Highness! Me!

DON CARLOS. Yes, you.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Alone! Oh, wondrous clemency!
Oh, generous conqueror, that spares the head
To torture thus the heart! What mercy this!

DON CARLOS. Choose 'twixt the traitor and the Doña Sol;
I must have one of them.

DON RUY GOMEZ. The master you!

[DON CARLOS approaches DoÑA SOL to lead her away.
She flies toward the Duke.]

DoÑA SOL. Save me, my lord!

[She pauses. — Aside.] Oh, misery! and yet
It must be so. My uncle's life, or else
The other's! — rather mine!

[To the King.] I follow you.

DON CARLOS [aside]. By all the saints! the thought triumphant is!

Ah, in the end you'll soften, princess mine!

[DoÑA SOL goes with a grave and steady step to the casket, opens it, and takes from it the dagger, which she hides in her bosom. DON CARLOS comes to her and offers his hand.]

DON CARLOS. What is't you're taking thence?

DOÑA SOL. Oh, nothing!

DON CARLOS. Is't
Some precious jewel?

DOÑA SOL. Yes.

DON CARLOS [*smiling*]. Show it to me.

DOÑA SOL. Anon you'll see it.

[*She gives her hand and prepares to follow him.*

DON RUY GOMEZ, *who has remained motionless and absorbed in thought, advances a few steps crying out.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Heavens, Doña Sol!

Oh, Doña Sol! Since he is merciless,

Help! Walls and armor come down on us now!

[*He runs to the King.*] Leave me my child! I have but her,
O King!

DON CARLOS [*dropping DOÑA SOL's hand*]. Then yield me
up my prisoner.

[*The Duke drops his head, and seems the prey of horrible indecision. Then he looks up at the portraits with supplicating hands before them.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Oh, now

Have pity on me all of you! [*He makes a step toward the hiding-place. DOÑA SOL watching him anxiously. He turns again to the portraits.*]

Oh, hide

Your faces! They deter me. [*He advances with trembling steps toward his own portrait, then turns again to the King.*]

Is't your will?

DON CARLOS. Yes.

[*The Duke raises a trembling hand toward the spring.*]

DOÑA SOL. O God!

DON RUY GOMEZ. No! [*He throws himself on his knees before the King.*]

In pity take my life!

DON CARLOS. Thy niece!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*rising*]. Take her, and leave me honor, then.

DON CARLOS [*seizing the hand of the trembling DOÑA SOL*]. Adieu, Duke.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Till we meet again! [*He watches the King, who retires slowly with DOÑA SOL. Afterwards he puts his hand on his dagger.*]

May God

Shield you! [*He comes back to the front of the stage panting, and stands motionless, with vacant stare, seeming neither to see nor hear anything, his arms crossed on his heaving chest. Meanwhile the King goes out with DOÑA SOL, the suite following two by two according to their rank. They speak in a low voice among themselves.*]

[*Aside*]. Whilst thou go'st joyous from my house,

O King, my ancient loyalty goes forth

From out my bleeding heart. [*He raises his head, looks all round, and sees that he is alone. Then he takes two swords from a panoply by the wall, measures them, and places them on a table. This done, he goes to the portrait, touches the spring, and the hidden door opens.*]

Come out.

[HERNANI appears at the door of the hiding-place.

DON RUY GOMEZ points to the two swords on the table.]

Now, choose.

Choose, for Don Carlos has departed now,

And it remains to give me satisfaction.

Choose, and be quick. What, then! trembles thy hand?

HERNANI. A duel! Oh, it cannot be, old man,
'Twixt us.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Why not? Is it thou art afraid?

Or that thou art not noble? So or not,

All men who injure me, by Hell, I count

Noble enough to cross their swords with mine.

HERNANI. Old man —

DON RUY GOMEZ. Come forth, young man, to slay me,
else

To be the slain.

HERNANI. To die, ah, yes! Against
My will thyself hast saved me, and my life
Is yours. I bid you take it.

DON RUY GOMEZ. This you wish?
[*To the portraits.*] You see he wills it.
[*To HERNANI.*] This is well. Thy prayer
Now make.

HERNANI. It is to thee, my lord, the last
I make.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Pray to the other Lord.

HERNANI. No, no,
To thee. Strike me, old man, — dagger or sword, —
Each one for me is good, — but grant me first
One joy supreme. Duke, let me see her ere
I die.

DON RUY GOMEZ. See her!

HERNANI. Or at the least I beg
That you will let me hear her voice once more —
Only this one last time!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Hear her!

HERNANI. Ah, well,
My lord, I understand thy jealousy,
But death already seizes on my youth.
Forgive me. Grant me — tell me that without
Beholding her, if it must be, I yet
May hear her speak, and I will die to-night.
I'll grateful be to hear her. But in peace
I'd calmly die, if thou would'st deign that ere
My soul is freed, it sees once more the soul
That shines so clearly in her eyes. To her
I will not speak. Thou shalt be there to see,
My father, and canst slay me afterwards.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*pointing to the recess still open*]. Oh,
Saints of Heaven! Can this recess be
So deep and strong that he has nothing heard?

HERNANI. No, I have nothing heard.

DON RUY GOMEZ. I was compelled
To yield up Doña Sol or thee.

HERNANI. To whom?

DON RUY GOMEZ. The King.

HERNANI. Madman! He loves her.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Loves her! He!

HERNANI. He takes her from us! He our rival is!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Curses be on him! Vassals! all to
horse —

To horse! Let us pursue the ravisher!

HERNANI. Listen! The vengeance that is sure of foot
Makes on its way less noise than this would do.

To thee I do belong. Thou hast the right
To slay me. Wilt thou not employ me first
As the avenger of thy niece's wrongs?

Let me take part in this thy vengeance due;
Grant me this boon, and I will kiss thy feet,
If so must be. Let us together speed

The King to follow. I will be thine arm.

I will avenge thee, Duke, and afterwards

The life that's forfeit thou shalt take.

DON RUY GOMEZ. And then.

As now, thou'lt ready be to die?

HERNANI. Yes, Duke.

DON RUY GOMEZ. By what wilt thou swear this?

HERNANI. My father's head.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Of thine own self wilt thou remember it?

HERNANI [*giving him the horn which he takes from his
girdle*]. Listen! Take you this horn, and whatsoe'er

May happen — what the place, or what the hour —

Whenever to thy mind it seems the time

Has come for me to die, blow on this horn

And take no other care; all will be done.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*offering his hand*]. Your hand! [*They
press hands.*]

[*To the portraits.*] And all of you are witnesses.

ACT IV

SCENE.— *The Tomb, Aix-la-Chapelle. The vaults which enclose the Tomb of Charlemagne at Aix-la-Chapelle. Great arches of Lombard architecture, with semicircular columns, having capitals of birds and flowers. At the right a small bronze door, low and curved. A single lamp suspended from the crown of the vault shows the inscription: CAROLVS MAGNVS. It is night. One cannot see to the end of the vaults, the eye loses itself in the intricacy of arches, steps, and columns which mingle in the shade.*

[*Enter DON CARLOS, DON RICARDO DE ROXAS, COUNT DE CASAPALMA, lanterns in hand, and wearing large cloaks and slouched hats.*]

DON RICARDO [*hat in hand*]. This is the place.

DON CARLOS. Yes, here it is the League
Will meet; they that together in my power
So soon shall be. Oh, it was well, my Lord
Of Trèves th' Elector — it was well of you
To lend this place; dark plots should prosper best
In the dank air of catacombs, and good
It is to sharpen daggers upon tombs.
Yet the stake's heavy — heads are on the game,
Ye bold assassins, and the end we'll see.
By Heaven, 'twas well a sepulcher to choose
For such a business, since the road will be
Shorter for them to traverse.

[*To DON RICARDO.*] Tell me now
How far the subterranean way extends?

DON RICARDO. To the strong fortress.

DON CARLOS. Farther than we need.

DON RICARDO. And on the other side it reaches quite
The Monastery of Altenheim.

DON CARLOS. Ah, where
Lothaire was overcome by Rodolf. Once
Again, Count, tell me o'er their names and wrongs.

DON RICARDO. Gotha.

DON CARLOS. Ah, very well I know why 'tis
The brave Duke is conspirator: he wills
For Germany, a German Emperor.

DON RICARDO. Hohenbourg.

DON CARLOS. Hohenbourg would better like
With Francis hell, than heaven itself with me.

DON CARLOS. Gil Tellez Giron.

DON CARLOS. Castile and our Lady!
The scoundrel! — to be traitor to his king!

DON RICARDO. One evening it is said that you were found
With Madam Giron. You had just before
Made him a baron; he revenges now
The honor of his dear companion.

DON CARLOS. This, then, the reason he revolts 'gainst
Spain?

What name comes next?

DON RICARDO. The Reverend Vasquez,
Avila's Bishop.

DON CARLOS. Pray does he resent
Dishonor of his wife!

DON RICARDO. Then there is named
Guzman de Lara, who is discontent,
Claiming the collar of your order.

DON CARLOS. Ah!
Guzman de Lara! If he only wants
A collar he shall have one.

DON RICARDO. Next the Duke
Of Lutzelbourg. As for his plans, they say —

DON CARLOS. Ah! Lutzelbourg is by the head too tall.

DON RICARDO. Juan de Haro — who Astorga wants.

DON CARLOS. These Haros! Always they the headsman's
pay
Have doubled.

DON RICARDO. That is all.

DON CARLOS. Not by my count.
These make but seven.

DON RICARDO. Oh, I did not name

Some bandits, probably engaged by Trèves
Or France.

DON CARLOS. Men without prejudice, of course,
Whose ready daggers turn to heaviest pay,
As truly as the needle to the pole.

DON RICARDO. However, I observed two sturdy ones
Among them, both new comers — one was young,
The other old.

DON CARLOS. Their names?

[DON RICARDO shrugs his shoulders in sign of ignorance.]

Their age, then, say?

DON RICARDO. The younger may be twenty.

DON CARLOS. Pity, then.

DON RICARDO. The elder must be sixty, quite.

DON CARLOS. One seems
Too young — the other, over-old; so much
For them the worse 'twill be. I will take care —
Myself will help the headsman, be there need.
My sword is sharpened for a traitor's block,
I'll lend it him if blunt his axe should grow,
And join my own imperial purple on
To piece the scaffold cloth, if it must be
Enlarged that way. But shall I Emperor prove?

DON RICARDO. The College at this hour deliberates.

DON CARLOS. When they've decided who shall be the one
They chose for Emperor of Germany,
What sign is to announce his name?

DON RICARDO. The guns.

A single firing will proclaim the Duke
Of Saxony is chosen Emperor;
Two if 'tis Francis; for Your Highness three.

DON CARLOS. And Doña Sol! I'm crossed on every side.
If, Count, by turn of luck, I'm Emperor made,
Go seek her; she by Cæsar might be won.

DON RICARDO [smiling]. Your Highness pleases.

DON CARLOS [haughtily]. On that subject peace!

I have not yet inquired what's thought of me.
But tell me when will it be truly known
Who is elected?

DON RICARDO. In an hour or so,
At latest.

DON CARLOS. Ah, three votes; and only three!
But first this trait'rous rabble we must crush,
And then we'll see to whom the Empire falls,

[DON RICARDO bows and exits. DON CARLOS falls
into a deep reverie, his arms crossed, his head
drooping; afterwards he raises it, and turns to
the tomb.]

Forgive me, Charlemagne! Oh, this lonely vault
Should echo only unto solemn words.
Thou must be angry at the babble vain
Of our ambition at your monument.
Here Charlemagne rests! How can the somber tomb
Without a rifting spasm hold such dust!
And art thou truly here, colossal power,
Creator of the world? And canst thou now
Crouch down from all thy majesty and might?
Ah, 'tis a spectacle to stir the soul
What Europe was, and what by thee 'twas made.

Say, Emperor! what can after Charlemagne
Another do! Speak, though thy sovereign breath
Should cleave this brazen door. Or rather now
Let me thy sanctuary enter lone!
Let me behold thy veritable face,
And not repulse me with a freezing breath.
Upon thy stony pillow elbows lean,
And let us talk. Yes, with prophetic voice
Tell me of things which make the forehead pale,
And clear eyes mournful. Speak, and do not blind
Thine awe-struck son, for doubtlessly thy tomb
Is full of light. Or if thou wilt not speak,

Let me make study in the solemn peace
 Of thee, as of a world, thy measure take,
 O giant, for there's nothing here below
 So great as thy poor ashes. Let them teach,
 Failing thy spirit.

[*He puts the key in the lock.*] Let us enter now.

[*He recoils.*] O God, if he should really whisper me!

If he be there and walks with noiseless tread,
 And I come back with hair in moments bleached!

I'll do it still. [*Sound of footsteps.*]

Who comes? who dares disturb

Besides myself the dwelling of such dead!

[*The sound comes nearer.*]

My murderers! I forgot! Now, enter we.

[*He opens the door of the tomb, which shuts upon him.*]

[*Enter several men walking softly, disguised by large cloaks and hats. They take each other's hands, going from one to another and speaking in a low tone.*]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR [*who alone carries a lighted torch*]. *Ad angusta.*

SECOND CONSPIRATOR. *Per angusta.*

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. The saints

Shield us.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR. The dead assist us.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Guard us, God!

[*Noise in the shade.*]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Who's there?

A VOICE. *Ad angusta.*

SECOND CONSPIRATOR. *Per angusta.*

[*Enter fresh Conspirators — noise of footsteps.*]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR [*to Third*]. See! there is some one still to come.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR. Who's there?

VOICE [*in the darkness*]. *Ad angusta.*

THIRD CONSPIRATOR. *Per angusta.*

[Enter more Conspirators, who exchange signs with their hands with the others.]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. 'Tis well.

All now are here. Gotha, to you it falls

To state the case. Friends, darkness waits for light.

[The Conspirators sit in a half-circle on the tombs.

The FIRST CONSPIRATOR passes before them, and from his torch each one lights a wax taper which he holds in his hand. Then the FIRST CONSPIRATOR seats himself in silence on a tomb a little higher than the others in the center of the circle.]

DUKE OF GOTHIA [rising]. My friends! This Charles of Spain, by mother's side

A foreigner, aspires to mount the throne

Of Holy Empire.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. But for him the grave.

DUKE OF GOTHIA [throwing down his light and crushing it with his foot]. Let it be with his head as with this flame.

ALL. So be it.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Death unto him.

DUKE OF GOTHIA. Let him die.

ALL. Let him be slain.

DON JUAN DE HARO. German his father was.

DUKE DE LUTZELBOURG. His mother Spanish.

DUKE OF GOTHIA. Thus you see that he

Is no more one than other. Let him die,

A CONSPIRATOR. Suppose th' Electors at this very hour Declare him Emperor!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Him! oh, never him!

DON GIL TELLEZ GIRON. What signifies? Let us strike off the head,

The Crown will fall.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. But if to him belongs

The Holy Empire, he becomes so great

And so august, that only God's own hand

Can reach him.

DUKE OF GOTH. All the better reason why
He dies before such power august he gains.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. He shall not be elected.

ALL. Not for him
The Empire.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Now, how many hands will't take
To put him in his shroud?

ALL. One is enough.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. How many strokes to reach his heart?

ALL. But one.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. Who, then, will strike?

ALL! All! All!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. The victim is
A traitor proved. They would an Emperor choose,
We've a high-priest to make. Let us draw lots.

*[All the Conspirators write their names on their
tablets, tear out the leaves, roll them up, and one
after another throw them into the urn on one of the
tombs.]*

Now, let us pray.

[All kneel.]

Oh, may the chosen one

Believe in God, and like a Roman strike,

Die as a Hebrew would, and brave alike

The wheel and burning pincers, laugh at rack,

And fire, and wooden horse, and be resigned

To kill and die. He might have all to do. *[He draws a parchment from the urn.]*

ALL. What name?

FIRST CONSPIRATOR *[in low voice.]* Hernani!

HERNANI *[coming out from the crowd of Conspirators.]* I
have won, yes, won!

I hold thee fast! Thee I've so long pursued

With vengeance.

DON RUY GOMEZ *[piercing through the crowd and taking
HERNANI aside.]* Yield — oh, yield this right to me.

HERNANI. Not for my life! Oh, signor, grudge me not
This stroke of fortune — 'tis the first I've known.

DON RUY GOMEZ. You nothing have! I'll give you houses,
lands,

A hundred thousand vassals shall be yours
In my three hundred villages, if you
But yield the right to strike to me.

HERNANI. No — no.

DUKE OF GOTH. Old man, thy arm would strike less sure
a blow.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Back! I have strength of soul, if not of
arm.

Judge not the sword by the mere scabbard's rust.

[To HERNANI.] You do belong to me.

HERNANI. My life is yours,
As his belongs to me.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*drawing the horn from his girdle*]. I
yield her up,
And will return the horn.

HERNANI [*trembling*]. What life! My life
And Doña Sol! No, I my vengeance choose.
I have my father to revenge — yet more,
Perchance I am inspired by God in this.

DON RUY GOMEZ. I yield thee Her — and give thee back
the horn!

HERNANI. No!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Boy, reflect.

HERNANI. Oh, Duke, leave me my prey.

DON RUY GOMEZ. My curses on you for depriving me
Of this my joy.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR [*to HERNANI*]. Oh, brother, ere they
can

Elect him — 'twould be well this very night
To watch for Charles.

HERNANI. Fear nought, I know the way
To kill a man.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR. May every treason fall
On traitor, and may God be with you now.
We Counts and Barons, let us take the oath
That if he fall, yet slay not, we go on

And strike by turn unflinching till Charles dies.

ALL [*drawing their swords*]. Let us all swear.

DUKE OF GOTHAM [to FIRST CONSPIRATOR]. My brother,
let's decide

On what we swear.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*taking his sword by the point and raising it above his head*]. By this same cross,

ALL [*raising their swords*]. And this

That he must quickly die impenitent.

[*They hear a cannon fired afar off. All pause and are silent. The door of the tomb half opens, and DON CARLOS appears at the threshold. A second gun is fired, then a third. He opens wide the door and stands erect and motionless without advancing.*]

DON CARLOS. Fall back, ye gentlemen — the Emperor hears.

[*All the lights are simultaneously extinguished. A profound silence. DON CARLOS advances a step in the darkness, so dense, that the silent, motionless Conspirators can scarcely be distinguished.*]

Silence and night! From darkness sprung, the swarm
Into the darkness plunges back again!

Think ye this scene is like a passing dream,

And that I take you, now your lights are quenched,

For men's stone figures seated on their tombs?

Just now, my statues, you had voices loud,

Raise, then, your drooping heads, for Charles the Fifth

Is here. Strike. Move a pace or two and show

You dare. But no, 'tis not in you to dare.

Your flaming torches, blood-red 'neath these vaults,

My breath extinguished; but now turn your eyes

Irresolute, and see that, if I thus

Put out the many, I can light still more.

[*He strikes the iron key on the bronze door of the tomb. At the sound all the depths of the cavern are filled with soldiers bearing torches and hal-*

berts. At their head the DUKE D'ALCALA, the MARQUIS D'ALMUÑAN, etc.]

Come on, my falcons! I've the nest — the prey.

[To Conspirators.] I can make blaze of light, 'tis my turn now,

Behold!

[To the Soldiers.] Advance — for flagrant is the crime.

HERNANI *[looking at the Soldiers]*. Ah, well! At first I thought 'twas Charlemagne.

Alone he seemed so great — but after all

'Tis only Charles the Fifth.

DON CARLOS *[to the DUKE D'ALCALA]*. Come, Constable Of Spain.

[To MARQUIS D'ALMUÑAN.] And you Castilian Admiral, Disarm them all.

[The Conspirators are surrounded and disarmed.]

DON RICARDO *[hurrying in and bowing almost to the ground]*. Your Majesty!

DON CARLOS. Alcalde

I make you of the palace.

DON RICARDO *[again bowing]*. Two Electors,

To represent the Golden Chamber, come

To offer to Your Sacred Majesty

Congratulations now.

DON CARLOS. Let them come forth.

[Aside to DON RICARDO.] The Doña Sol.

[RICARDO bows and exits.]

[Enter with flambeaux and flourish of trumpets the KING OF BOHEMIA and the DUKE OF BAVARIA, both wearing cloth of gold, and with crowns on their heads. Numerous followers. German nobles carrying the banner of the Empire, the double-headed Eagle, with the escutcheon of Spain in the middle of it. The Soldiers divide, forming lines between which the Electors pass to the Emperor, to whom they bow low. He returns the salutation by raising his hat.]

DUKE OF BAVARIA. Most Sacred Majesty

Charles, of the Romans King, and Emperor,
 The Empire of the world is in your hands —
 Yours is the throne to which each king aspires!
 The Saxon Frederick was elected first,
 But he judged you more worthy, and declined.
 Now, then, receive the crown and globe, O King —
 The Holy Empire doth invest you now,
 Arms with the sword, and you indeed are great.

DON CARLOS. The College I will thank on my return.
 But go, my brother of Bohemia,
 And you, Bavarian cousin. — Thanks; but now
 I do dismiss you — I shall go myself.

KING OF BOHEMIA. Oh! Charles, our ancestors were
 friends. My sire
 Loved yours, and their two fathers were two friends —
 So young! exposed to varied fortunes! say,
 Oh, Charles, may I be ranked a very chief
 Among thy brothers? I cannot forget
 I knew you as a little child.

DON CARLOS. Ah, well —
 King of Bohemia, you presume too much. [*He gives him his
 hand to kiss, also the DUKE OF BAVARIA, both bow low.*]
 Depart.

[*Exeunt the two ELECTORS with their followers.*]

THE CROWD. Long live the Emperor!

DON CARLOS [*aside*]. So 'tis mine,
 All things have helped, and I am Emperor —
 By the refusal, though, of Frederick
 Surnamed the Wise!

[*Enter DOÑA SOL led by RICARDO.*]

DOÑA SOL. What, soldiers! — Emperor!
 Hernani! Heaven, what an unlooked-for chance!

HERNANI. Ah! Doña Sol!

DON GUY GOMEZ [*aside to HERNANI*]. She has not seen
 me.

[*DOÑA SOL runs to HERNANI, who makes her recoil
 by a look of disdain.*]

HERNANI. Madam!

DOÑA SOL [*drawing the dagger from her bosom*]. I still
his poniard have!

HERNANI [*taking her in his arms*]. My dearest one!

DON CARLOS. Be silent all.

[*To the Conspirators.*] Is't you remorseless are?

I need to give the world a lesson now, .

The Lara of Castile, and Gotha, you

Of Saxony — all — all — what were your plans

Just now? I bid you speak.

HERNANI. Quite simple, Sire,

The thing, and we can briefly tell it you.

We 'graved the sentence on Belshazzar's wall. [*He takes out
a poinard and brandishes it.*]

We render unto Cæsar Cæsar's due.

DON CARLOS. Silence!

[*To DON RUY GOMEZ.*] And you! You too are traitor, Silva!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Which of us two is traitor, Sire?

HERNANI [*turning toward the Conspirators*]. Our heads
And Empire — all that he desires he has.

[*To the EMPEROR.*] The mantle blue of kings encumbered
you;

The purple better suits — it shows not blood.

DON CARLOS [*to DON RUY GOMEZ*]. Cousin of Silva, this
is felony,

Attainting your baronial rank. Think well,

Don Ruy — high treason!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Kings like Roderick

Count Julians make.

DON CARLOS [*to the DUKE D'ALCALA*]. Seize only those who
seem

The nobles, — for the rest! —

[DON RUY GOMEZ, the DUKE DE LUTZELBOURG, the
DUKE OF GOTH, DON JUAN DE HARO, DON GUZ-
MAN DE LARA, DON TELLEZ GIRON, the BARON OF
HOHENBOURG separate themselves from the group
of Conspirators, among whom is HERNANI. The
DUKE D'ALCALA surrounds them with guards.]

DOÑA SOL [*aside*]. Ah, he is saved!

HERNANI [*coming from among the Conspirators*]. I claim to be included!

[*To DON CARLOS.*] Since to this
It comes, the question of the axe — that now
Hernani, humble churl, beneath thy feet
Unpunished goes, because his brow is not
At level with thy sword — because one must
Be great to die, I rise. God, who gives power,
And gives to thee the scepter, made me Duke
Of Segorbe and Cardona, Marquis too
Of Monroy, Albaterra's Count, of Gor
Viscount, and Lord of many places, more
Than I can name. Juan of Aragon
Am I, Grand Master of Avis — the son
In exile born, of murder'd father slain
By king's decree, King Charles, which me proscribed,
Thus death 'twixt us is family affair;
You have the scaffold — we the poniard hold.
Since Heaven a duke has made me, and exile
A mountaineer, — since all in vain I've sharpen'd
Upon the hills my sword, and in the torrents
Have tempered it. [*He puts on his hat.*]

[*To the Conspirators.*] Let us be covered now,
Us the Grandees of Spain. [*They cover.*]

[*To DON CARLOS.*] Our heads, O King,
Have right to fall before thee covered thus.

[*To the Prisoners.*] Silva, and Haro — Lara — men of rank
And race make room for Juan of Aragon.

Give me my place, ye dukes and counts — my place.

[*To the Courtiers and Guards.*] King, headsmen, varlets
— Juan of Aragon

Am I. If all your scaffolds are too small
Make new ones. [*He joins the group of nobles.*]

DOÑA SOL. Heavens!

DON CARLOS. I had forgotten quite
This history.

HERNANI. But they who bleed remember

Far better. Th' evil that wrong-doer thus
So senselessly forgets, forever stirs
Within the outraged heart.

DON CARLOS. Therefore, enough
For me to bear this title, that I'm son
Of sires, whose power dealt death to ancestors
Of yours!

DOÑA SOL [*falling on her knees before the Emperor*]. Oh,
pardon — pardon! Mercy, Sire,
Be pitiful, or strike us both, I pray,
For he my lover is, my promised spouse,
In him it is alone I live — I breathe;
Oh, Sire, in mercy us together slay.
Trembling — oh, Majesty! — I trail myself
Before your sacred knees. I love him, Sire,
And he is mine — as Empire is your own.
Have pity!

[DON CARLOS *looks at her without moving*.]

Oh, what thought absorbs you?

DON CARLOS. Cease.

Rise — Duchess of Segorbe — Marchioness
Of Monroy — Countess Albaterra — and —
[*To HERNANI*.] Thine other names, Don Juan?

HERNANI. Who speaks thus,
The King?

DON CARLOS. No, 'tis the Emperor.

DOÑA SOL. Just Heav'n!

DON CARLOS [*pointing to her*]. Duke Juan, take your
wife.

HERNANI [*his eyes raised to heaven, DOÑA SOL in his
arms*]. Just God!

DON CARLOS [*to DON RUY GOMEZ*]. My cousin,
I know the pride of your nobility,
But Aragon with Silva well may mate.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*bitterly*]. 'Tis not a question of nobility.

HERNANI [*looking with love on DOÑA SOL and still holding*

her in his arms]. My deadly hate is vanishing away.
[Thows away his dagger.]

DON RUY GOMEZ *[aside, and looking at them]*. Shall I
 betray myself? Oh, no, — my grief,
 My foolish love would make them pity cast
 Upon my venerable head. Old man
 And Spaniard! Let the hidden fire consume,
 And suffer still in secret. Let heart break
 But cry not; — they would laugh at thee.

DOÑA SOL *[still in HERNANI's arms]*. My Duke!

HERNANI. Nothing my soul holds now but love!

DOÑA SOL. Oh, joy!

DON CARLOS *[aside, his hand in his bosom]*. Stifle thyself,
 young heart so full of flame,
 Let reign again the better thoughts which thou
 So long hast troubled. Henceforth let thy loves,
 Thy mistresses, alas! — be Germany
 And Flanders — *[looking at the banner]* Spain. The Emperor
 Is like

The Eagle his companion, in the place
 Of heart, there's but a 'scutcheon.

HERNANI. Cæsar you!

DON CARLOS. Don Juan, of your ancient name and race
 Your soul is worthy *[pointing to DOÑA SOL]* — worthy e'en of
 her.

Kneel, Duke.

*[HERNANI kneels. DON CARLOS unfastens his own
 Golden Fleece and puts it on HERNANI's neck.]*

Receive this collar.

*[DON CARLOS draws his sword and strikes him three
 times on the shoulder.]*

Faithful be,
 For by St. Stephen now I make thee Knight.

[He raises and embraces him.]

Thou hast a collar softer and more choice;
 That which is wanting to my rank supreme, —
 The arms of loving woman, loved by thee.
 Thou wilt be happy — I am Emperor.

[*To Conspirators.*] Sirs, I forget your names. Anger and hate

I will forget. Go — go — I pardon you.

This is the lesson that the world much needs.

THE CONSPIRATORS. Glory to Charles!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*to DON CARLOS*]. I only suffer, then!

DON CARLOS. And I!

DON RUY GOMEZ. But I have not like Majesty
Forgiven!

HERNANI. Who is't has worked this wondrous change?

ALL, NOBLES, SOLDIERS, CONSPIRATORS. Honor to Charles
the Fifth, and Germany!

DON CARLOS [*turning to the tomb*]. Honor to Charle-
magne! Leave us now together.

[*Exeunt all. DON CARLOS, alone, bends toward the
tomb.*]

Art thou content with me, O Charlemagne!

Have I the kingship's littleness stripped off?

Become as Emperor another man?

Can I Rome's miter add unto my helm?

Have I the right the fortunes of the world

To sway? Have I a steady foot that safe

Can tread the path, by Vandal ruins strewed,

Which thou has beaten by thine armies vast?

Have I my candle lighted at thy flame?

Did I interpret right the voice that spake

Within this tomb? Ah, I was lost — alone

Before an Empire — a wide howling world

That threatened and conspired! There were the Danes

To punish, and the Holy Father's self

To compensate — with Venice — Soliman,

Francis, and Luther — and a thousand dirks

Gleaming already in the shade — snares — rocks;

And countless foes; a score of nations each

Of which might serve to awe a score of kings.

Things ripe, all pressing to be done at once.

I cried to thee — with what shall I begin?

And thou didst answer — Son, by clemency!

ACT V

SCENE.—*Saragossa. A terrace of the palace of Aragon. At the back a flight of steps leading to the garden. At the right and left, doors on to a terrace which shows at the back of the stage a balustrade surmounted by a double row of Moorish arches, above and through which are seen the palace gardens, fountains in the shade, shrubberies and moving lights, and the Gothic and Arabic arches of the palace illuminated. It is night. Trumpets afar off are heard. Masks and Dominoes, either singly or in groups, cross the terrace here and there. At the front of the stage a group of young lords, their masks in their hands, laugh and chat noisily.*

[*Enter DON SANCHO SANCHEZ DE ZUÑIGA, COUNT DE MONTERET, DON MATIAS CENTURION, MARQUIS D'ALMUÑAN, DON RICARDO DE ROXAS, COUNT DE CASAPALMA, DON FRANCISCO DE SOTOMAYOR, COUNT DE VALALCAZAR, DON GARCIA SUAREZ DE CARABAJAL, COUNT DE PENALVER.*]

DON GARCIA. Now to the bride long life — and joy — I say!

DON MATIAS [*looking to the balcony*]. All Saragossa at its windows shows.

DON GARCIA. And they do well. A torchlight wedding ne'er

Was seen more gay than this, nor lovelier night,
Nor handsomer married pair.

DON MATIAS. Kind Emp'ror!

DON MATIAS. What has become of the old Duke? Has he His coffin ordered?

DON SANCHO. Marquis, jest not thus
At him! For he a haughty spirit has;
And this old man loved well the Doña Sol.
His sixty years had turned his hair to gray,
One day has bleached it.

DON GARCIA. Not again, they say,
Has he been seen in Saragossa.

DON SANCHE. Well?

Wouldst thou that to the bridal he should bring
His coffin?

DON FRANCISCO. What's the Emperor doing now?

DON SANCHE. The Emperor is out of sorts just now,
Luther annoys him.

DON RICARDO. Luther! — subject fine
For care and fear! Soon would I finish him
With but four men-at-arms!

DON MATIAS. And Soliman
Makes him dejected.

DON GARCIA. Luther — Soliman —
Neptune — the devil — Jupiter! What are
They all to me? The women are most fair,
The masquerade is splendid, and I've said
A hundred foolish things!

DON SANCHE. Behold you now
The chief thing.

DON RICARDO. Garcia's not far wrong, I say.
Not the same man am I on festal days.
When I put on the mask in truth I think.
Another head it gives me.

DON SANCHE [*apart to DON MATIAS*]. Pity 'tis
That all days are not festivals!

DON FRANCISCO. Are those
Their rooms?

DON GARCIA [*with a nod of his head*]. Arrive they will, no
doubt, full soon.

DON FRANCISCO. Dost think so?

DON GARCIA. Most undoubtedly!

DON FRANCISCO. 'Tis well.

The bride is lovely!

DON RICARDO. What an Emperor!
The rebel chief, Hernani, to be pardoned —
Wearing the Golden Fleece! and married too!
Ah, if the Emperor had been by me
Advised, the gallant should have had a bed
Of stone, the lady one of down.

DON SANCHEO [*aside to DON MATIAS*]. How well
I'd like with my good sword this lord to smash,
A lord made up of tinsel coarsely joined;
Pourpoint of count filled out with bailiff's soul!

DON RICARDO [*drawing near*]. What are you saying?

DON MATIAS [*aside to DON SANCHEO*]. Count, no quarrel
here!

[*To DON RICARDO.*] He was reciting one of Petrarch's son-
nets

Unto his lady love.

DON GARCIA. Have you not seen
Among the flowers and women, and dresses gay
Of many hues, a figure specter-like,
Whose domino all black, upright against
A balustrade, seems like a spot upon
The festival?

DON RICARDO. Yes, by my faith!

DON GARCIA. Who is't?

DON RICARDO. By height and mien I judge that it must
be —

The Admiral — the Don Prancasio.

DON FRANCISCO. Oh, no.

DON GARCIA. He has not taken off his mask.

DON FRANCISCO. There is no need; it is the Duke de
Soma,

Who likes to be observed. 'Tis nothing more.

DON RICARDO. No; the Duke spoke to me.

DON GARCIA. Who, then, can be
This Mask? But see — he's here.

[*Enter a Black Domino, who slowly crosses the back of the stage. All turn and watch him without his appearing to notice them.*]

DON SANCHEO. If the dead walk,
That is their step.

DON GARCIA [*approaching the Black Domino*]. Most noble
Mask —

[*The Black Domino stops and turns. GARCIA recoils.*]

I swear,

Good sirs, that I saw flame shine in his eyes.

DON SANCHO. If he's the devil, he'll find one he can Address.

[*He goes to the Black Domino, who is still motionless.*]

Ho, Demon! Comest thou from hell?

THE MASK. I come not thence — 'tis thither that I go.

[*He continues his walk and disappears at the balustrade of the staircase. All watch him with a look of horrified dismay.*]

DON MATIAS. Sepulchral is his voice, as can be heard.

DON GARCIA. Pshaw! What would frighten elsewhere, at a ball

We laugh at.

DON SANCHO. Silly jesting 'tis!

DON GARCIA. Indeed,

If Lucifer is come to see us dance,

Waiting for lower regions, let us dance!

DON SANCHO. Of course it's some buffoonery.

DON MATIAS. We'll know

To-morrow.

DON SANCHO [*to DON MATIAS*]. Look now what becomes of him,

I pray you!

DON MATIAS [*at the balustrade of the terrace*]. Down the steps he's gone. That's all.

DON SANCHO. A pleasant jester he! [*Musing.*] 'Tis strange.

DON GARCIA [*to lady passing*]. Marquise,

Let us pray dance this time. [*He bows and offers his hand.*]

THE LADY. You know, dear sir,

My husband will my dances with you all

Count up.

DON GARCIA. All the more reason. Pleased is he

To count, it seems, and it amuses him.

He calculates — we dance.

[*The lady gives her hand. Exeunt.*]

DON SANCHO [*thoughtfully*]. In truth, 'tis strange!

DON MATIAS. Behold the married pair! Now, silence all!

[*Enter HERNANI and DOÑA SOL hand in hand. DOÑA SOL in magnificent bridal dress. HERNANI in black velvet and with the Golden Fleece hanging from his neck. Behind them a crowd of Masks and of ladies and gentlemen who form their retinue. Two halberdiers in rich liveries follow them, and four pages precede them. Every one makes way for them and bows as they approach. Flourish of trumpets.*]

HERNANI [*saluting*]. Dear friends!

DON RICARDO [*advancing and bowing*]. Your Excellency's happiness

Makes ours.

DON FRANCISCO [*looking at DOÑA SOL*]. Now, by St. James, 'tis Venus' self

That he is leading.

DON MATIAS. Happiness is his!

DON SANCHO [*to DON MATIAS*]. 'Tis late now, let us leave.

[*All salute the married pair and retire—some by the door, others by the stairway at the back.*]

HERNANI [*escorting them*]. Adieu!

DON SANCHO [*who has remained to the last, and pressing his hand*]. Be happy!

[*Exit DON SANCHO. HERNANI and DOÑA SOL remain alone. The sound of voices grows fainter and fainter till it ceases altogether. During the early part of the following scene the sound of trumpets grows fainter, and the lights by degrees are extinguished — till night and silence prevail.*]

DOÑA SOL. At last they all are gone.

HERNANI [*seeking to draw her to his arms*]. Dear love!

DOÑA SOL [*drawing back a little*]. Is't late? —

At least to me it seems so.

HERNANI. Angel, dear,
Time ever drags till we together are.

DOÑA SOL. This noise has wearied me. Is it not true,
Dear lord, that all this mirth but stifling is
To happiness?

HERNANI. Thou sayest truly, love,
For happiness is serious, and asks
For hearts of bronze on which to 'grave itself.
Pleasure alarms it, flinging to it flowers;
Its smile is nearer tears than mirth.

DOÑA SOL. Thy smile's
Like daylight in thine eyes.

[HERNANI seeks to lead her to the door.] Oh, presently.

HERNANI. I am thy slave; yes, linger if thou wilt,
Whate'er thou dost is well. I'll laugh and sing
If thou desirest that it should be so.
Bid the volcano stifle flame, and 'twill
Close up its gulfs, and on its sides grow flowers,
And grasses green.

DOÑA SOL. How good you are to me,
My heart's Hernani!

HERNANI. Madam, what name's that?
I pray in pity speak it not again!
Thou call'st to mind forgotten things. I know
That he existed formerly in dreams,
Hernani, he whose eyes flashed like a sword,
A man of night and of the hills, a man
Proscribed, on whom was seen writ everywhere
The one word *vengeance*. An unhappy man
That drew down malediction! I know not
The man they called Hernani. As for me,
I love the birds and flowers, and woods — and song
Of nightingale. I'm Juan of Aragon,
The spouse of Doña Sol — a happy man!

DOÑA SOL. Happy am I!

HERNANI. What does it matter now,
The rags I left behind me at the door!

Behold, I to my palace desolate
Come back. Upon the threshold-sill there waits
For me an angel; I come in and lift
Upright the broken columns, kindle fire,
And ope again the windows; and the grass
Upon the courtyard I have all pluck'd up;
For me there is but joy, enchantment, love,
Let them give back my towers, and donjon-keep,
My plume, and seat at the Castilian board
Of council, comes my blushing Doña Sol,
Let them leave us — the rest forgotten is.
Nothing I've seen, nor said, nor have I done.
Anew my life begins, the past effacing.
Wisdom or madness, you I have and love,
And you are all my joy!

DoÑA SOL. How well upon
The velvet black the golden collar shows!

HERNANI. You saw it on the King ere now on me.

DoÑA SOL. I did not notice. Others, what are they
To me? Besides, the velvet is it, or
The satin? No, my Duke, it is thy neck
Which suits the golden collar. Thou art proud
And noble, my own lord.
[*He seeks to lead her indoors.*] Oh, presently,
A moment! See you not, I weep with joy?
Come look upon the lovely night. [*She goes to the balustrade.*] My Duke,
Only a moment — but the time to breathe
And gaze. All now is o'er, the torches out,
The music done. Night only is with us.
Felicity most perfect! Think you not
That now while all is still and slumbering,
Nature, half waking, watches us with love?
No cloud is in the sky. All things like us
Are now at rest. Come, breathe with me the air
Perfumed by roses. Look, there is no light,
Nor hear we any noise. Silence prevails.
The moon just now from the horizon rose

E'en while you spoke to me; her trembling light
And thy dear voice together reached my heart.
Joyous and softly calm I felt, oh, thou
My lover! And it seemed that I would then
Most willingly have died.

HERNANI. Ah, who is there
Would not all things forget when listening thus
Unto this voice celestial! Thy speech
But seems a chant with nothing human mixed,
And as with one, who gliding down a stream
On summer eve, sees pass before his eyes
A thousand flowery plains, my thoughts are drawn
Into thy reveries!

DOÑA SOL. This silence is
Too deep, and too profound the calm. Say, now,
Wouldst thou not like to see a star shine forth
From out the depths — or hear a voice of night,
Tender and sweet, raise suddenly its song?

HERNANI [*smiling*]. Capricious one! Just now you fled
away
From all the songs and lights.

DOÑA SOL. Ah, yes, the ball!
But yet a bird that in the meadow sings,
A nightingale in moss or shadow lost,
Or flute far off. For music sweet can pour
Into the soul a harmony divine,
That like a heavenly choir wakes in the heart
A thousand voices! Charming would it be!

[*They hear the sound of a horn from the shade.*]

My prayer is heard.

HERNANI [*aside, trembling*]. Oh, miserable man!

DOÑA SOL. An angel read my thought — 'twas thy good
angel
Doubtless?

HERNANI [*bitterly*]. Yes, my good angel! [*Aside.*]
There, again!

DOÑA SOL [*smiling*]. Don Juan, I recognize your horn.

HERNANI. Is't so?

DoÑA SOL. The half this serenade to you belongs?

HERNANI. The half, thou hast declared it.

DoÑA SOL. Ah, the ball

Detestable! Far better do I love

The horn that sounds from out the woods! And since

It is your horn 'tis like your voice to me.

[*The horn sounds again.*]

HERNANI [*aside*]. It is the tiger howling for his prey!

DoÑA SOL. Don Juan, this music fills my heart with joy.

HERNANI [*drawing himself up and looking terrible*]. Call me Hernani! call me it again!

For with that fatal name I have not done.

DoÑA SOL. [*trembling*]. What ails you?

HERNANI. The old man!

DoÑA SOL. O God, what looks!

What is it ails you?

HERNANI. That old man who in

The darkness laughs. Can you not see him there?

DoÑA SOL. Oh, you are wand'ring! Who is this old man?

HERNANI. The old man!

DoÑA SOL. On my knees I do entreat

Thee, say what is the secret that afflicts

Thee thus?

HERNANI. I swore it!

DoÑA SOL. Swore! [*She watches his movements with anxiety. He stops suddenly and passes his hand across his brow.*]

HERNANI [*aside*]. What have I said?

Oh, let me spare her. [*Aloud.*] I — nought. What was it I said?

DoÑA SOL. You said —

HERNANI. No, no, I was disturbed —

And somewhat suffering I am. Do not

Be frightened.

DoÑA SOL. You need something? Order me,

Thy servant.

[*The horn sounds again.*]

HERNANI [*aside*]. Ah, he claims! He claims the pledge!

He has my oath. [*Feeling for his dagger.*] Not there. It must be done!

Ah! —

DoÑA SOL. Suff'rest thou so much?

HERNANI. 'Tis an old wound
That I thought healed — it has reopened now.
[*Aside.*] She must be got away. [*Aloud.*] My best beloved,
Now, listen; there's a little box that in
Less happy days I carried with me —

DoÑA SOL. Ah,
I know what 'tis you mean. Tell me your wish.

HERNANI. It holds a flask of an elixir which
Will end my sufferings. — Go!

DoÑA SOL. I go, my lord.

[*Exit by the door to their apartments.*]

HERNANI [*alone*]. This, then, is how my happiness must
end!

Behold the fatal finger that doth shine
Upon the wall! My bitter destiny
Still jests at me. [*He falls into a profound yet convulsive
reverie. Afterwards he turns abruptly.*]

Ah, well! I hear no sound.

Am I myself deceiving? —

[*The Mask in black domino appears at the balustrade of the steps. HERNANI stops petrified.*]

THE MASK. "Whatsoe'er
May happen, what the place, or what the hour,
Whenever to thy mind it seems the time
Has come for me to die — blow on this horn
And take no other care. All will be done."
This compact had the dead for witnesses.
Is it all done?

HERNANI [*in a low voice*]. 'Tis he!

THE MASK. Unto thy home
I come, I tell thee that it is the time.
It is my hour. I find thee hesitate.

HERNANI. Well, then, thy pleasure say. What wouldest
thou

Of me?

THE MASK. I give thee choice 'twixt poison draught
And blade. I bear about me both. We shall
Depart together.

HERNANI. Be it so.

THE MASK. Shall we
First pray?

HERNANI. What matter?

THE MASK. Which of them wilt thou?

HERNANI. The poison.

THE MASK. Then hold out your hand.

[*He gives a vial to HERNANI, who pales at receiving it.*]

Now drink,

That I may finish.

[*HERNANI lifts the vial to his lips, but recoils.*]

HERNANI. Oh, for pity's sake,
Until to-morrow wait! If thou hast heart
Or soul, if thou art not a specter just
Escaped from flame, if thou art not a soul
Accursed, forever lost; if on thy brow
Not yet has God inscribed his "never." Oh,
If thou hast ever known the bliss supreme
Of loving, and at twenty years of age
Of wedding the beloved; if ever thou
Hast clasped the one thou lovedst in thine arms,
Wait till to-morrow. Then thou canst come back!

THE MASK. Childish it is for you to jest this way!
To-morrow! Why, the bell this morning toll'd
Thy funeral! And I should die this night,
And who would come and take thee after me!
I will not to the tomb descend alone.
Young man, 'tis thou must go with me!

HERNANI. Well, then,
I say thee nay; and, demon, I from thee
Myself deliver. I will not obey.

THE MASK. As I expected. Very well. On what,
Then, didst thou swear? Ah, on a trifling thing,

The mem'ry of thy father's head. With ease
Such oath may be forgotten. Youthful oaths
Are light affairs.

HERNANI. My father! — father! Oh
My senses I shall lose!

THE MASK. Oh, no, — 'tis but
A perjury and treason.

HERNANI. Duke!

THE MASK. Since now
The heirs of Spanish houses make a jest
Of breaking promises, I'll say Adieu! [*He moves as if to leave.*]

HERNANI. Stay!

THE MASK. Then —

HERNANI. Oh, cruel man! [*He raises the vial.*] Thus to
return
Upon my path at heaven's door!

[*Reënter DOÑA SOL without seeing the Mask, who is standing erect near the balustrade of the stairway at the back of the stage.*]

DOÑA SOL. I've failed
To find that little box.

HERNANI [*aside*]. O God! 'tis she!
At such a moment here!

DOÑA SOL. What is't, that thus
I frighten him, — e'en at my voice he shakes!
What hold'st thou in thy hand? What fearful thought!
What hold'st thou in thy hand? Reply to me.

[*The DOMINO unmasks; she utters a cry in recognizing DON RUY.*]

'Tis poison!

HERNANI. Oh, great Heaven!

DOÑA SOL [*to HERNANI*]. What is it
That I have done to thee? What mystery
Of horror? I'm deceived by thee, Don Juan!

HERNANI. Ah, I had thought to hide it all from thee.
My life I promised to the Duke that time

He saved it. Aragon must pay this debt
To Silva.

DoÑA SOL. Unto me you do belong,
Not him. What signify your other oaths?
[To DON RUY GOMEZ.] My love it is which gives me
strength, and, Duke,
I will defend him against you and all
The world.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*unmoved*]. Defend him if you can
against

An oath that's sworn.

DoÑA SOL. What oath?

HERNANI. Yes, I have sworn.

DoÑA SOL. No, no; naught binds thee; it would be a crime,
A madness, an atrocity — no, no,
It cannot be.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Come, Duke.

[HERNANI makes a gesture to obey. DoÑA SOL tries
to stop him.]

HERNANI. It must be done.

Allow it, Doña Sol. My word was pledged
To the Duke, and to my father now in heaven!

DoÑA SOL [*to DON RUY GOMEZ*]. Better that to a tigress
you should go

And snatch away her young, than take from me

Him whom I love. Know you at all what is

This Doña Sol? Long time I pitied you,

And, in compassion for your age, I seemed

The gentle girl, timid and innocent,

But now see eyes made moist by tears of rage. [*She draws
a dagger from her bosom.*]

See you this dagger? Old man imbecile!

Do you not fear the steel when eyes flash threat?

Take care, Don Ruy! I'm of thy family.

Listen, mine uncle! Had I been your child

It had been ill for you, if you had laid

A hand upon my husband! [*She throws away the dagger,*

and falls on her knees before him.]

At thy feet

I fall! Mercy! Have pity on us both.

Alas! my lord, I am but woman weak,

My strength dies out within my soul, I fail

So easily; 'tis at your knees I plead,

I supplicate — have mercy on us both!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Doña Sol!

DOÑA SOL. Oh, pardon! With us Spaniards
Grief bursts forth in stormy words, you know it.

Alas! you used not to be harsh! My uncle,

Have pity, you are killing me indeed

In touching him! Mercy, have pity now,

So well I love him!

DON RUY GOMEZ [*gloomily*]. You love him too much!

HERNANI. Thou weepst!

DOÑA SOL. No, my love, no, no, it must
Not be. I will not have you die.

[*To DON RUY.*] To-day

Be merciful, and I will love you well,

You also.

DON RUY GOMEZ. After him; the dregs you'd give,

The remnants of your love, and friendliness.

Still less and less. — Oh, think you thus to quench

The thirst that now devours me?

[*Pointing to HERNANI.*] He alone

Is everything. For me kind pityings!

With such affection, what, pray, could I do?

Fury! 'tis he would have your heart, your love,

And be enthroned, and grant a look from you

As alms; and if vouchsafed a kindly word

'Tis he would tell you, — say so much, it is

Enough, — cursing in heart the greedy one

The beggar, unto whom he's forced to fling

The drops remaining in the emptied glass.

Oh, shame! derision! No, we'll finish. Drink!

HERNANI. He has my promise, and it must be kept.

DON RUY GOMEZ. Proceed.

[HERNANI raises the vial to his lips; DOÑA SOL throws herself on his arm.]

DOÑA SOL. Not yet. Deign both of you to hear me.

DON RUY GOMEZ. The grave is open and I cannot wait.

DOÑA SOL. A moment only, — Duke, and my Don Juan, — Ah! both are cruel! What is it I ask?

An instant! That is all I beg from you.

Let a poor woman speak what's in her heart,

Oh, let me speak —

DON RUY GOMEZ. I cannot wait.

DOÑA SOL. My lord,

You make me tremble! What, then, have I done?

HERNANI. His crime is rending him.

DOÑA SOL [*still holding his arm*]. You see full well I have a thousand things to say.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*to HERNANI*]. Die — die You must.

DOÑA SOL [*still hanging on his arm*]. Don Juan, when all's said, indeed,

Thou shalt do what thou wilt.

[*She snatches the vial.*] I have it now!

[*She lifts the vial for HERNANI and the old man to see.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Since with two women I have here to deal,

It needs, Don Juan, that I elsewhere go

In search of souls. Grave oaths you took to me,

And by the race from which you sprang. I go

Unto your father, and to speak among

The dead. Adieu. [*He moves as if to depart. HERNANI holds him back.*]

HERNANI. Stay, Duke.

[*To DOÑA SOL.*] Alas! I do

Implore thee. Wouldst thou wish to see in me

A perjured felon only, and e'erwhere

I go "a traitor" written on my brow?

In pity give the poison back to me.

'Tis by our love I ask it, and our souls

Immortal —

DOÑA SOL [*sadly*]. And thou wilt? [*She drinks.*] Now, take the rest.

DON RUY GOMEZ [*aside*]. 'Twas, then, for her!

DOÑA SOL [*returning the half-emptied vial to HERNANI*].

I tell thee, take.

HERNANI [*to DON RUY*]. See'st thou, Oh, miserable man!

DOÑA SOL. Grieve not for me, I've left thy share.

HERNANI [*taking the vial*]. O God!

DOÑA SOL. Not thus would'st thou Have left me mine. But thou! Not thine the heart Of Christian wife! Thou knowest not to love As Silvas do — but I've drunk first — made sure. Now, drink it, if thou wilt!

HERNANI. What hast thou done, Unhappy one?

DOÑA SOL. 'Twas thou who willed it so.

HERNANI. It is a frightful death!

DOÑA SOL. No — no — why so?

HERNANI. This philter leads unto the grave.

DOÑA SOL. And ought We not this night to rest together? Does It matter in what bed?

HERNANI. My father, thou Thyself avengest upon me, who did Forget thee! [*He lifts the vial to his mouth.*]

DOÑA SOL [*throwing herself on him*]. Heavens, what strange agony!

Ah, throw this philter far from thee! My reason Is wand'ring. Stop! Alas! oh, my Don Juan, This drug is potent, in the heart it wakes A hydra with a thousand tearing teeth Devouring it. I knew not that such pangs Could be! What is the thing? 'Tis liquid fire. Drink not! For much thou'dst suffer!

HERNANI [*to DON RUY*]. Ah, thy soul

Is cruel! Could'st thou not have found for her
Another drug? [*He drinks and throws the vial away.*]

DOÑA SOL. What dost thou?

HERNANI. What thyself

Hast done.

DOÑA SOL. Come to my arms, young lover, now. [*They sit down close to each other.*]

Does not one suffer horribly?

HERNANI. No, no.

DOÑA SOL. These are our marriage rites! But for a bride
I'm very pale, say am I not?

HERNANI. Ah me!

DON RUY GOMEZ. Fulfilled is now the fatal destiny!

HERNANI. Oh, misery and despair to know her pangs!

DOÑA SOL. Be calm. I'm better. —Toward new brighter
light

We now together open out our wings.

Let us with even flight set out to reach

A fairer world. Only a kiss — a kiss! [*They embrace.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Oh, agony supreme!

HERNANI [*in a feeble voice*]. Oh, bless'd be Heav'n
That will'd for me a life by specters followed,
And by abysses yawning circled still,
Yet grants, that weary of a road so rough,
I fall asleep my lips upon thy hand.

DON RUY GOMEZ. How happy are they!

HERNANI [*in voice growing weaker and weaker*]. Come —
come, Doña Sol,

All's dark. Dost thou not suffer?

DOÑA SOL [*in a voice equally faint*]. Nothing now.
Oh, nothing.

HERNANI. Seest thou not fires in the gloom?

DOÑA SOL. Not yet.

HERNANI [*with a sigh*]. Behold — [*He falls.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ [*raising the head, which falls again*].
He's dead!

DOÑA SOL [*dishveled and half raising herself on the seat*].
Oh, no, we sleep.

He sleeps. It is my spouse that here you see.

We love each other — we are sleeping thus.

It is our bridal. [*In a failing voice.*] I entreat you not

To wake him, my Lord Duke of Meudocé,

For he is weary.

[*She turns round the face of HERNANI.*] Turn to me, my love
More near — still closer — [*she falls back.*]

DON RUY GOMEZ. Dead! Oh, I am damn'd! [*He kills himself.*]

A MINUET

(1915)

BY

LOUIS N. PARKER

Copyright, 1922, by Samuel French. All Rights Reserved.

"A Minuet" is fully protected by copyright, and all rights are reserved.

Permission to act, to read publicly, or to make any use of this play must be obtained from Samuel French, 25 West Forty-fifth Street, New York.

CHARACTERS

THE MARQUIS.

THE MARCHIONESS.

THE GAOLER.

SCENE.—*Living-room in the Gaoler's quarters of the Conciergerie, Paris.*

TIME.—*During the Terror—French Revolution.*

A MINUET

DEDICATED TO ELSIE LESLIE

SCENE.—*The living-room in the GAOLER'S quarters in the prison of the Conciergerie. There is only one door, and that is at the back. In an angle is a window, heavily barred inside and out. Through this the upper stories of houses can be seen. These are lighted up now and then with a wavering glare as of passing torches. The room is but sparsely furnished. There is a rickety table toward the spectator's left, with a straw-bottomed chair beside it. There are two or three other similar chairs. In one corner is a small iron stove, with a chimney which meanders deviously, and finally goes out through one of the top panes of the window. In another corner is a minute metal washing-apparatus. It is night. The room is lighted by a hanging-lamp with a green shade, suspended from the ceiling. On the walls are caricatures of the king, Revolutionary placards, and a pleasing picture of the guillotine.*

[THE MARQUIS, elegantly, but soberly, dressed, is seated at the table, reading in a small, calf-bound book.]

THE MARQUIS [reading].

"Is there an after-life, a deathless soul,
A heaven, to which to aspire as to a goal?
Who shall decide what nobody may know?
Science is dumb; Faith has no proofs to show.
Men will dispute, as autumn leaves will rustle:
The soul is an idea; the heart, a muscle."

[He leaves off reading.]

Well said, Voltaire! This philosophic doubt
Has ruled my life, and now shall lead me out;

'Tis this has helped me to a mind serene
While I await the gentle guillotine.

[*He closes the book and lays it aside.*]

What's to be hoped for, what is to be dreaded,
Whether I die in bed or be beheaded?
I've lived; I've loved; enjoyed; and here's the end.
I'll meet my death as I should meet a friend;
Or, better, as a nobleman of France
Salutes his mistress in a courtly dance.
[*He rises and walks to and fro, with his hands behind him.*]
I am alone; no soul will sorrow for me;
My enemies dread me; and my friends—abhor me.
For all I know, my wife—the ugly word!—
Is in Coblentz, attended by absurd,
Perfumed and mincing abbés. She and I,
I'm proud to say, lived as I mean to die,
With never a trace of middle-class emotions;
I went my way; she followed her own notions;
And when she hears I'm dead, so fine her breed,
She'll arch her eyebrows, and exclaim, "Indeed?"
[*The door is flung open, and THE GAOLER appears.*]

THE GAOLER [*brutally*].

Citizen!

THE MARQUIS.

Joseph?

[*He sits.*]

Is the tumbril here?

THE GAOLER.

Not yet, aristocrat; but have no fear.

The widow never missed—

THE MARQUIS.

The—widow?

THE GAOLER.

The guillotine.

Aye,

THE MARQUIS [*with a shrug*].
The people's wit!

THE GAOLER.

I say,

She never missed an assignation yet.
One down, t'other come on! She'll not forget.

THE MARQUIS.

Yet she's a woman! Wonderful!

THE GAOLER.

You seem

As though you thought your doom was but a dream.
[*Roughly.*]
Aristocrat, you are to die!

THE MARQUIS [*calmly*].

How true.

And so are you, my friend, and so are you,
Sooner or later. In your case, I think
It will be sooner, owing to the drink.

THE GAOLER [*coming at him threateningly*].

You dare—!

THE MARQUIS [*warding him off with a delicate hand*].

Oh, please, let's have no vulgar quarrel!

And I apologize for seeming moral.
You've been so courteous as to—*lend*—your room
In which to await my, as you call it, "doom."
[*Handing him a coin*].

Take my last louis, friend, and go away.

THE GAOLER.

I spit on it!

THE MARQUIS.

And pocket it. Good day.

THE GAOLER [*pointing to the door*].

I came to tell you that a woman's there,
Asking to see you.

THE MARQUIS.

What?

THE GAOLER.

She's young and fair,
And, judging by the richness of her dress,
Some heretofore aristo, nothing less.

THE MARQUIS [*with grave reproof*].

All women are aristocrats by birth;
No old or ugly woman treads the earth.

THE GAOLER.

Ho! you should see my wife!

THE MARQUIS.

I should be proud.

THE GAOLER.

Shall I admit her?

THE MARQUIS.

Yes.

THE GAOLER.

Nevertheless—

It's not allowed.

THE MARQUIS [*handing him a jeweled snuff-box*].

My snuff-box. From [*He springs to his feet and kisses it.*]
The king!

THE GAOLER.

I spit on it.

THE MARQUIS.

You spit on everything.

That's low.

THE GAOLER.

The widow will spit out your head.

[He stumps out, leaving the door open.]

THE MARQUIS.

And that's my equal! Pah!

[He picks up a hand-glass and arranges his jabot, etc.]

Why do I dread

This meeting? Who can be the fair

Who ventures hither to this loathsome lair?

The Duchess of Saint-Maur? A heart of ice.

The Countess of Dunance? A cockatrice.

The Marchioness of Beaurepaire? Alas!

Her love and faith were brittle as this glass.

The Lady of Bougency? *[He laughs.]*

But she had

Three other lovers, while she drove me mad.

Not one would risk her head to say good-bye

To a discarded lover soon to die.

Can it be Jenny of the Palais Royal?

I never met a woman half so loyal.

She brought her innocence into my life;

She almost loved me—for a while.

[In the glass he is still holding he sees the Marchioness, who now appears in the doorway.]

My wife!

[The Marchioness comes in, and the door swings to with a clang. She makes a magnificent and elaborate curtsey.]

THE MARCHIONESS.

Marquis!

THE MARQUIS *[with an equally elaborate bow]*.

Ah! Marchioness!

THE MARCHIONESS *[brightly]*.

Milord O'Connor

Kindly escorted me.

THE MARQUIS.

Oh! too much honor!

THE MARCHIONESS.

*[Looking round the room; with a dainty sigh.]*Ah, what a world, where gentlemen are treated
Like vulgar criminals!

THE MARQUIS.

Won't you be seated?

THE MARCHIONESS.

I greatly fear I must cut short my visit;
Time is so precious nowadays.

THE MARQUIS.

Ah! Is it?

How did you hear that I must soon—go hence?

THE MARCHIONESS.

A charming abbé told me in Coblenz.

THE MARQUIS.

What did you say?

THE MARCHIONESS.

I scarce gave any heed.
I arched my eyebrows, and exclaimed, "Indeed?"

THE MARQUIS.

Ah!—I'm distressed you chose to undertake
A long and tiresome journey for my sake.

THE MARCHIONESS.

Oh, I had charming company. Time passed away
Quite quickly, thanks to ombre and piquet.*[With a pout.]*

I lost a deal of money.

THE MARQUIS.

My regrets.

I've squandered my last coin.

THE MARCHIONESS.

And then at Metz

A charming man, an Irishman—such grace!

Such wit! Such—

THE MARQUIS.

Never mind.

THE MARCHIONESS.

Begged for a place

Beside me in my coach.

THE MARQUIS.

His name?

THE MARCHIONESS.

Milord

O'Connor.

THE MARQUIS.

To be sure. He—touched a chord?

THE MARCHIONESS.

Oh, yes!

THE MARQUIS [*insidiously*].

And you were—kind?

THE MARCHIONESS.

To him or you?

THE MARQUIS.

Oh, dying men don't count.

THE MARCHIONESS [*thinking it over*].

That's very true.

THE MARQUIS.

No doubt he's waiting for you now?

LOUIS N. PARKER

THE MARCHIONESS.

No doubt.

THE MARQUIS.

You must not strain his patience; 'twill wear out.

[*With great courtesy, but a dangerous gleam in his eyes.*]

And when you join him, tell him I regret

I'm not at liberty. We might have—met.

THE MARCHIONESS.

You would have liked each other very much.

Such conversation! Such high spirits! Such—

THE MARQUIS [*rises*].

This prison is no place for you. Farewell!

THE MARCHIONESS.

The room is ugly. I prefer my cell.

THE MARQUIS.

[*Arrested as he is moving toward the door*].

Your—cell?

THE MARCHIONESS.

Of course. I am a prisoner, too.

That's what I came for.

THE MARQUIS.

What?

THE MARCHIONESS [*very simply*].

To die with you.

THE MARQUIS.

To die with me!

THE MARCHIONESS [*rises*].

A Beaulere could not fail.

THE MARQUIS.

But—

THE MARCHIONESS.

Yes?

THE MARQUIS.

The guillotine!

THE MARCHIONESS.

A mere detail.

THE MARQUIS.

Pardon me, Marchioness, but I confess
You almost made me show surprise.

THE MARCHIONESS.

What less

Did you expect of me?

THE MARQUIS.

We've lived apart

So long, I had forgotten—

THE MARCHIONESS.

I'd a heart?

You had forgotten many things beside:—
The happy bridegroom and the happy bride.
And so had I. At court the life we lead
Makes love a frivolous pastime.

THE MARQUIS [*gravely*].

And we need

The shock of death to show us we are human.

THE MARCHIONESS.

Marquis and Marchioness? No! Man and woman.
[*Pause.*]

Once you were tender.

THE MARQUIS.

Once you were sincere.

THE MARCHIONESS.

So long ago!

THE MARQUIS.

So short a time!

THE MARCHIONESS.

Oh, dear!

Our minds are like a potpourri at dusk,
Breathing dead rosemary, lavender, and musk;
Things half forgotten; silly things—sublime!
A faded ribbon, withered rose, a rhyme;
A melody of old Provence, whose lilt
Haunts us as in a dream, like amber, spilt
God knows how long ago!

THE MARQUIS.

Do you remember
How first I wooed you by the glowing ember
Of winter fires?

THE MARCHIONESS.

Ah, you were passionate then!

THE MARQUIS.

I was the proudest, happiest of men.

THE MARCHIONESS.

I, the most innocent of maids.

THE MARQUIS.

Alas!

How the years change us as they come and pass!

THE MARCHIONESS [*very tenderly*].

Do you remember, by the Rhone,
The gray old castle on the hill,
The brambled pathway to the mill?
You plucked a rose. We were alone;
For cousins need no chaperon.
How hot the days were, which the shrill
Cicada's chirping seemed to fill:
A treble to the mill-wheel's drone!
Ah, me! what happy days were those!

THE MARQUIS.

Gone, with the perfume of the rose.
 I called you Doris, for I own
 'Meg' on my fancy cast a chill.

THE MARCHIONESS.

I called you Amadis! You will
 Admit no knightlier name is known.
 We were like fledglings newly flown.

THE MARQUIS.

Like little children: Jack and Jill.

THE MARCHIONESS.

With many a scratch and many a spill
 We scrambled over stick and stone.

THE MARQUIS.

Ah, me! what happy days were those!

THE MARCHIONESS.

Gone, with the perfume of the rose.

THE MARQUIS.

Over lush meadows, thickly strown
 With daisy and with daffodil,
 We ran at dawn to catch the trill
 Of larks on wild wing sunward blown!

THE MARCHIONESS.

In orange-groves we heard the moan
 Of love-lorn nightingales; until
 You pressed my hand. A tender thrill
 Was in your touch and in your tone.
Ah, me! what happy days were those!

THE MARQUIS.

Gone, with the perfume of the rose.

THE MARCHIONESS.

Marquis, might we not yet atone
For all our errors, if we chose?

THE MARQUIS.

But—Doris, *all the perfume's gone.*

THE MARCHIONESS.

[*Producing a withered rose from her bosom.*]

But—Amadis, I've kept the rose!

THE MARQUIS.

You've kept the rose! But will it bloom again?

THE MARCHIONESS.

Perhaps in heaven.

THE MARQUIS [*with a shrug*].

Is there a heaven?

THE GAOLER [*appearing at the door*].

You twain.

Aristocrats, the tumbril waits!

[*He disappears.*]

THE MARCHIONESS [*swaying a moment*].

Ah, me!

THE MARQUIS [*eagerly*].

Is there a heaven, Doris?

THE MARCHIONESS.

[*Recovering, smiles bravely, and holds out her hand.*]

Come and see.

[*The Marquis takes her hand and they go out.*]

HEDDA GABLER

(1890)

BY

HENRIK IBSEN

CHARACTERS

GEORGE TESMAN.

HEDDA TESMAN, *his wife.*

MISS JULIANA TESMAN, *his aunt.*

MRS. ELVSTED.

JUDGE BRACK.

EILERT LÖVBORG.

BERTA, *servant at the Tesmans.*

*The scene of the action is Tesman's villa, in the west end of
Christiania.*

HEDDA GABLER

ACT I

A spacious, handsome, and tastefully furnished drawing-room, decorated in dark colours. In the back, a wide doorway with curtains drawn back, leading into a smaller room decorated in the same style as the drawing-room. In the right-hand wall of the front room, a folding door leading out to the hall. In the opposite wall, on the left, a glass door, also with curtains drawn back. Through the panes can be seen part of a verandah outside, and trees covered with autumn foliage. An oval table, with a cover on it, and surrounded by chairs, stands well forward. In front, by the wall on the right, a wide stove of dark porcelain, a high-backed arm-chair, a cushioned footrest, and two foot-stools. A settee, with a small round table in front of it, fills the upper right-hand corner. In front, on the left, a little way from the wall, a sofa. Further back than the glass door, a piano. On either side of the doorway at the back a whatnot with terra-cotta and majolica ornaments.—Against the back wall of the inner room a sofa, with a table, and one or two chairs. Over the sofa hangs the portrait of a handsome elderly man in a General's uniform. Over the table a hanging lamp, with an opal glass shade.—A number of bouquets are arranged about the drawing-room, in vases and glasses. Others lie upon the tables. The floors in both rooms are covered with thick carpets.—Morning light. The sun shines in through the glass door.

[MISS JULIANA TESMAN, with her bonnet on and carrying a parasol, comes in from the hall, followed by BERTA, who carries a bouquet wrapped in paper. MISS TESMAN is a

comely and pleasant-looking lady of about sixty-five. She is nicely but simply dressed in a grey walking-cos-tume. BERTA is a middle-aged woman of plain and rather countrified appearance.]

MISS TESMAN [*stops close to the door, listens and says softly*]. Upon my word, I don't believe they are stirring yet!

BERTA [*also softly*]. I told you so, Miss. Remember how late the steamboat got in last night. And then, when they got home!—good Lord, what a lot the young mistress had to unpack before she could get to bed.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well—let them have their sleep out. But let us see that they get a good breath of the fresh morning air when they do appear.

[She goes to the glass door and throws it open.]

BERTA [*beside the table, at a loss what to do with the bouquet in her hand*]. I declare there isn't a bit of room left. I think I'll put it down here, Miss. [*Places it on the piano.*]

MISS TESMAN. So you've got a new mistress now, my dear Berta. Heaven knows it was a wrench to me to part with you.

BERTA [*on the point of weeping*]. And do you think it wasn't hard for me, too, Miss? After all the blessed years I've been with you and Miss Rina.

MISS TESMAN. We must make the best of it, Berta. There was nothing else to be done. George can't do without you, you see—he absolutely can't. He has had you to look after him ever since he was a little boy.

BERTA. Ah, but, Miss Julia, I can't help thinking of Miss Rina lying helpless at home there, poor thing. And with only that new girl! She'll never learn to take proper care of an invalid.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, I shall manage to train her. And of course, I shall take most of it upon myself. You needn't be uneasy about my poor sister, Berta.

BERTA. But there's another thing, Miss. I'm so mortally afraid I shan't be able to suit the young mistress.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, well—just at first there may be one or two things—

BERTA. Most like she'll be terrible grand in her ways.

MISS TESMAN. Well, you can't wonder at that—General Gabler's daughter! Think of the sort of life she was accustomed to in her father's time. Don't you remember how we used to see her riding down the road along with the General? In that long black habit—and with feathers in her hat?

BERTA. Yes, indeed—I remember well enough—! But good Lord, I should never have dreamt in those days that she and Master George would make a match of it.

MISS TESMAN. Nor I. But, by-the-bye, Berta, in future you mustn't say Master George. You must say Dr. Tesman.

BERTA. Yes, the young mistress spoke of that too—last night—the moment they set foot in the house. Is it true then, Miss?

MISS TESMAN. Indeed it is. Only think, Berta—some foreign university has made him a doctor—while he has been abroad, you understand. I hadn't heard a word about it, until he told me himself on the pier.

BERTA. Well, well, he's clever enough for anything. But I didn't think he'd have gone in for doctoring people, too.

MISS TESMAN. It's not that sort of doctor he is. [*Nods significantly.*] And let me tell you, we may have to call him something still grander before long.

BERTA. You don't say so! What can that be, Miss?

MISS TESMAN [*smiling*]. H'm—shouldn't you like to know! [*With emotion.*] Ah, dear, dear—if my poor brother could only look up from his grave now, and see what his little boy has grown into! [*Looks around.*] Bless me, Berta—why have you done this? Taken the chintz cover off all the furniture?

BERTA. The mistress told me to. She can't abide covers on the chairs, she says.

MISS TESMAN. Are they going to make this their every-day sitting-room then?

BERTA. Yes, that's what I understood—from the mistress. Master George—the doctor—he said nothing.

[GEORGE TESMAN comes from the right into the inner room, humming to himself, and carrying an unstrapped empty portmanteau. He is a middle-sized, young-looking man of thirty-three, rather stout, with a round, open cheerful face, fair hair and beard. He wears spectacles, and is somewhat carelessly dressed in comfortable indoor clothes.]

MISS TESMAN. Good morning, good morning, George.

TESMAN [*in the doorway between the rooms*]. Aunt Julia? Dear Aunt Julia! [*Goes up to her and shakes hands warmly.*] Come all this way—so early? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Why, of course I had to come and see how you were getting on.

TESMAN. In spite of your having had no proper night's rest?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, that makes no difference to me.

TESMAN. Well, I suppose you got home all right from the pier? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite safely, thank goodness. Judge Brack was good enough to see me right to my door.

TESMAN. We were so sorry we couldn't give you a seat in the carriage. But you saw what a pile of boxes Hedda had to bring with her.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, she certainly had plenty of boxes.

BERTA [*to TESMAN*]. Shall I go in and see if there's anything I can do for the mistress?

TESMAN. No, thank you, Berta—you needn't. She said she would ring if she wanted anything.

BERTA [*going towards the right*]. Very well.

TESMAN. But look here—take this portmanteau with you.

BERTA [*taking it*]. I'll put it in the attic.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

TESMAN. Fancy, Auntie—I had the whole of that portmanteau chock full of copies of documents. You wouldn't believe how much I have picked up from all the archives I have been examining—curious old details that no one has had any idea of—

MISS TESMAN. Yes, you don't seem to have wasted your time on your wedding trip, George.

TESMAN. No, that I haven't. But do take off your bonnet, Auntie! Look here! Let me untie the strings—eh?

MISS TESMAN [*while he does so*]. Well, well—this is just as if you were still at home with us.

TESMAN [*with the bonnet in his hand, looks at it from all sides*]. Why, what a gorgeous bonnet you've been investing in!

MISS TESMAN. I bought it on Hedda's account.

TESMAN. On Hedda's account? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so that Hedda needn't be ashamed of me if we happened to go out together.

TESMAN [*patting her cheek*]. You always think of everything, Aunt Julia. [*Lays the bonnet on a chair beside the table.*] And now, look here—suppose we sit comfortably on the sofa and have a little chat, till Hedda comes.

[*They seat themselves. She places her parasol in the corner of the sofa.*]

MISS TESMAN [*takes both his hands and looks at him*]. What a delight it is to have you again, as large as life, before my very eyes, George! My George—my poor brother's own boy!

TESMAN. And it's a delight for me, too, to see you again, Aunt Julia! You, who have been father and mother in one to me.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, yes, I know you will always keep a place in your heart for your old aunts.

TESMAN. And what about Aunt Rina? No improvement—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, no—we can scarcely look for any improvement in her case, poor thing. There she lies helpless, as she has lain for all these years. But heaven grant I may not lose her yet awhile! For if I did, I don't know what I should make of my life, George—especially now that I haven't you to look after any more.

TESMAN [*patting her back*]. There, there, there——!

MISS TESMAN [*suddenly changing her tone*]. And to

think that here you are a married man, George!—And that you should be the one to carry off Hedda Gabler—the beautiful Hedda Gabler! Only think of it—she, that was so beset with admirers!

TESMAN [*hums a little and smiles complacently*]. Yes, I fancy I have several good friends about town who would like to stand in my shoes—eh?

MISS TESMAN. And then this fine long wedding-tour you have had! More than five—nearly six months——

TESMAN. Well, for me it has been a sort of tour of research as well. I have had to do a great deal of grubbing among old records—and to read no end of books too, Auntie.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, yes, I suppose so. [*More confidentially, and lowering her voice a little.*] But listen, George—have you nothing—nothing special to tell me?

TESMAN. As to our journey?

MISS TESMAN. Yes.

TESMAN. No, I don't know of anything except what I have told you in my letters. I had a doctor's degree conferred on me—but that I told you yesterday.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, you did. What I mean is—haven't you any—any—expectations——?

TESMAN. Expectations?

MISS TESMAN. Why, you know, George—I'm your old auntie!

TESMAN. Of course I have expectations.

MISS TESMAN. Ah!

TESMAN. I have every expectation of being a professor one of these days.

MISS TESMAN. Oh, yes, a professor——

TESMAN. Indeed, I may say I am certain of it. But my dear Auntie—you know all about that already?

MISS TESMAN [*laughing to herself*]. Of course I do. You are quite right there. [*Changing the subject.*] We were talking about your journey. It must have cost a great deal of money, George?

TESMAN. Well, you see—my handsome travelling-scholarship went a good way.

MISS TESMAN. But I can't understand how you can have made it go far enough for two.

TESMAN. No, that's not so easy to understand—eh?

MISS TESMAN. And especially travelling with a lady—they tell me that makes it ever so much more expensive.

TESMAN. Yes, of course—it makes it a little more expensive. But Hedda had to have this trip, Auntie! She really had to. Nothing else would have done.

MISS TESMAN. No, no I suppose not. A wedding-tour seems to be quite indispensable nowadays.—Tell me—have you gone thoroughly over the house yet?

TESMAN. You may be sure I have. I have been afoot ever since daylight.

MISS TESMAN. And what do you think of it all?

TESMAN. I'm delighted! Quite delighted! Only I can't think what we are to do with the two empty rooms between this inner parlour and Hedda's bedroom.

MISS TESMAN [*laughing*]. Oh, my dear George, I dare say you may find some use for them—in the course of time.

TESMAN. Of course you are right, Aunt Julia! You mean as my library increases—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, quite so, my dear boy. It was your library I was thinking of.

TESMAN. I am specially pleased on Hedda's account. Often and often, before we were engaged, she said that she would never care to live anywhere but in Secretary Falk's villa.

MISS TESMAN. It was lucky that this very house should come into the market, just after you had started.

TESMAN. Yes, Aunt Julia, the luck was on our side, wasn't it—eh?

MISS TESMAN. But the expense, my dear George! You will find it very expensive, all this.

TESMAN [*looks at her, a little cast down*]. I suppose I shall, Aunt!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, frightfully!

TESMAN. How much do you think? In round numbers?—Eh?

MISS TESMAN. I can't even guess until all the accounts come in.

TESMAN. Well, fortunately, Judge Brack has secured the most favourable terms for me—so he said in a letter to Hedda.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, don't be uneasy, my dear boy.—Besides, I have given security for the furniture and all the carpets.

TESMAN. Security? You? My dear Aunt Julia—what sort of security could you give?

MISS TESMAN. I have given a mortgage on our annuity.

TESMAN [*jumps up*]. What! On your—and Aunt Rina's annuity!

MISS TESMAN. Yes, I knew of no other plan, you see.

TESMAN [*placing himself before her*]. Have you gone out of your senses, Auntie! Your annuity—it's all that you and Aunt Rina have to live upon.

MISS TESMAN. Well, well, don't get so excited about it. It's only a matter of form you know—Judge Brack assured me of that. It was he that was kind enough to arrange the whole affair for me. A mere matter of form, he said.

TESMAN. Yes, that may be all very well. But nevertheless——

MISS TESMAN. You will have your own salary to depend upon now. And, good heavens, even if we did have to pay up a little——! To eke things out a bit at the start——! Why, it would be nothing but a pleasure to us.

TESMAN. Oh, Auntie—will you never be tired of making sacrifices for me!

MISS TESMAN [*rises and lays her hands on his shoulders*]. Have I had any other happiness in this world except to smooth your way for you, my dear boy? You, who have had neither father nor mother to depend on. And now we have reached the goal, George! Things have looked black enough for us, sometimes; but, thank heaven, now you have nothing to fear.

TESMAN. Yes, it is really marvelous how everything has turned out for the best.

MISS TESMAN. And the people who opposed you—who

wanted to bar the way for you—now you have them at your feet. They have fallen, George. Your most dangerous rival—his fall was the worst.—Now he has to lie on the bed he has made for himself—poor misguided creature.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything of Eilert? Since I went away, I mean.

MISS TESMAN. Only that he is said to have published a new book.

TESMAN. What! Eilert Lövborg! Recently—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Yes, so they say. Heaven knows whether it can be worth anything! Ah, when your new book appears—that will be another story, George! What is it to be about?

TESMAN. It will deal with the domestic industries of Brabant during the Middle Ages.

MISS TESMAN. Fancy—to be able to write on such a subject as that!

TESMAN. However, it may be some time before the book is ready. I have all these collections to arrange first, you see.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, collecting and arranging—no one can beat you at that. There you are my poor brother's own son.

TESMAN. I am looking forward eagerly to setting to work at it; especially now that I have my own delightful home to work in.

MISS TESMAN. And, most of all, now that you have the wife of your heart, my dear George.

TESMAN [*embracing her*]. Oh, yes, yes, Aunt Julia. Hedda—she is the best part of all! [*Looks towards the doorway.*] I believe I hear her coming—eh?

[*HEDDA enters from the left through the inner room. She is a woman of nine-and-twenty. Her face and figure show refinement and distinction. Her complexion is pale and opaque. Her steel-gray eyes express a cold, unruffled repose. Her hair is of an agreeable medium brown, but not particularly abundant. She is dressed in a tasteful, somewhat loose-fitting morning-gown.*]

MISS TESMAN [*going to meet HEDDA*]. Good morning, my dear Hedda! Good morning, and a hearty welcome.

HEDDA [*holds out her hand*]. Good morning, dear Miss Tesman! So early a call! That is kind of you.

MISS TESMAN [*with some embarrassment*]. Well—has the bride slept well in her new home?

HEDDA. Oh yes, thanks. Passably.

TESMAN [*laughing*]. Passably! Come, that's good, Hedda! You were sleeping like a stone when I got up.

HEDDA. Fortunately. Of course one has always to accustom one's self to new surroundings, Miss Tesman—little by little. [*Looking towards the left.*] Oh—there the servant has gone and opened the verandah door, and let in a whole flood of sunshine.

MISS TESMAN [*going towards the door*]. Well, then, we will shut it.

HEDDA. No, no, not that! Tesman, please draw the curtains. That will give a softer light.

TESMAN [*at the door*]. All right—all right. There now, Hedda, now you have both shade and fresh air.

HEDDA. Yes, fresh air we certainly must have, with all these stacks of flowers—— But—won't you sit down, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. No, thank you. Now that I have seen that everything is all right here—thank heaven!—I must be getting home again. My sister is lying longing for me, poor thing.

TESMAN. Give her my very best love, Auntie; and say I shall look in and see her later in the day.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, yes, I'll be sure to tell her. But by-the-bye, George—[*feeling in her dress pocket*—I have almost forgotten—I have something for you here.

TESMAN. What is it, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN [*produces a flat parcel wrapped in newspaper and hands it to him*]. Look here, my dear boy.

TESMAN [*opening the parcel*]. Well, I declare—Have you really saved them for me, Aunt Julia! Hedda! isn't this touching—eh?

HEDDA [*beside the whatnot on the right*]. What is it?

TESMAN. My old morning-shoes! My slippers.

HEDDA. Indeed. I remember you often spoke of them while we were abroad.

TESMAN. Yes, I missed them terribly. [*Goes up to her.*] Now you shall see them, Hedda!

HEDDA [*going towards the stove*]. Thanks, I really don't care about it.

TESMAN [*following her*]. Only think—ill as she was, Aunt Rina embroidered these for me. Oh you can't think how many associations cling to them.

HEDDA [*at the table*]. Scarcely for me.

MISS TESMAN. Of course not for Hedda, George.

TESMAN. Well, but now that she belongs to the family, I thought—

HEDDA [*interrupting*]. We shall never get on with this servant, Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Not get on with Berta?

TESMAN. Why, dear, what puts that in your head? Eh?

HEDDA [*pointing*]. Look there? She has left her old bonnet lying about on a chair.

TESMAN [*in consternation, drops the slippers on the floor*]. Why, Hedda—

HEDDA. Just fancy, if any one should come in and see it!

TESMAN. But Hedda—that's Aunt Julia's bonnet.

HEDDA. Is it!

MISS TESMAN [*taking up the bonnet*]. Yes, indeed it's mine. And, what's more, it's not old, Madame Hedda.

HEDDA. I really did not look closely at it, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN [*trying on the bonnet*]. Let me tell you it's the first time I have worn it—the very first time.

TESMAN. And a very nice bonnet it is too—quite a beauty!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, it's no such great things, George. [*Looks around her.*] My parasol——? Ah, here. [*Takes it.*] For this is mine too—[*mutters*]—not Berta's.

TESMAN. A new bonnet and a new parasol! Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Very handsome indeed.

TESMAN. Yes, isn't it? Eh? But Auntie, take a good look at Hedda before you go! See how handsome she is!

MISS TESMAN. Oh, my dear boy, there's nothing new in that. Hedda was always lovely. [*She nods and goes towards the right.*]

TESMAN [*following*]. Yes, but have you noticed what splendid condition she is in? How she has filled out on the journey?

HEDDA [*crossing the room*]. Oh, do be quiet—!

MISS TESMAN [*who has stopped and turned*]. Filled out?

TESMAN. Of course you don't notice it so much now that she has that dress on. But I, who can see—

HEDDA [*at the glass door, impatiently*]. Oh, you can't see anything.

TESMAN. It must be the mountain air in the Tyrol—

HEDDA [*curtly, interrupting*]. I am exactly as I was when I started.

TESMAN. So you insist; but I'm quite certain you are not. Don't you agree with me, Auntie?

MISS TESMAN [*who has been gazing at her with folded hands*]. Hedda is lovely—lovely—lovely. [*Goes up to her, takes her head between both hands, draws it downwards, and kisses her hair.*] God bless and preserve Hedda Tesman—for George's sake.

HEDDA [*gently freeing herself*]. Oh!— Let me go.

MISS TESMAN [*in quiet emotion*]. I shall not let a day pass without coming to see you.

TESMAN. No, you won't, will you, Auntie? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Good-bye—good-bye!

[*She goes out by the hall door. TESMAN accompanies her. The door remains half open. TESMAN can be heard repeating his message to Aunt Rina and his thanks for the slippers.*]

[*In the meantime, HEDDA walks about the room raising her arms and clenching her hands as if in desperation. Then she flings back the curtains from the glass door, and stands there looking out.*]

[*Presently TESMAN returns and closes the door behind him.*]

TESMAN [*picks up the slippers from the floor*]. What are you looking at, Hedda?

HEDDA [*once more calm and mistress of herself*]. I am only looking at the leaves. They are so yellow—so withered.

TESMAN [*wraps up the slippers and lays them on the table*]. Well you see, we are well into September now.

HEDDA [*again restless*]. Yes, to think of it!—Already in—
in September.

TESMAN. Don't you think Aunt Julia's manner was strange, dear? Almost solemn? Can you imagine what was the matter with her? Eh?

HEDDA. I scarcely know her, you see. Is she often like that?

TESMAN. No, not as she was to-day.

HEDDA [*leaving the glass door*]. Do you think she was annoyed about the bonnet?

TESMAN. Oh, scarcely at all. Perhaps a little, just at the moment—

HEDDA. But what an idea, to pitch her bonnet about in the drawing-room! No one does that sort of thing.

TESMAN. Well, you may be sure Aunt Julia won't do it again.

HEDDA. In any case, I shall manage to make my peace with her.

TESMAN. Yes, my dear, good Hedda, if you only would.

HEDDA. When you call this afternoon, you might invite her to spend the evening here.

TESMAN. Yes, that I will. And there's one thing more you could do that would delight her heart.

HEDDA. What is it?

TESMAN. If you could only prevail on yourself to address her more familiarly. For my sake, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No, no, Tesman—you really mustn't ask that of me. I have told you so already. I shall try to call her "Aunt"; and you must be satisfied with that.

TESMAN. Well, well. Only I think now that you belong to the family, you—

HEDDA. H'm—I can't in the least see why—

[*She goes up towards the middle doorway.*]

TESMAN [*after a pause*]. Is there anything the matter with you, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. I'm only looking at my old piano. It doesn't go at all well with the other things.

TESMAN. The first time I draw my salary we'll see about exchanging it.

HEDDA. No, no—no exchanging. I don't want to part with it. Suppose we put it there in the inner room and then get another here in its place. When it's convenient, I mean.

TESMAN [*a little taken aback*]. Yes—of course we could do that.

HEDDA [*takes up the bouquet from the piano*]. These flowers were not here last night when we arrived.

TESMAN. Aunt Julia must have brought them for you.

HEDDA [*examining the bouquet*]. A visiting card. [*Takes it out and reads:*] "Shall return later in the day." Can you guess whose card it is?

TESMAN. No. Whose? Eh?

HEDDA. The name is "Mrs. Elvsted."

TESMAN. Is it really? Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Miss Rysing that was.

HEDDA. Exactly. The girl with the irritating hair, that she was always showing off. An old flame of yours, I've been told.

TESMAN [*laughing*]. Oh, that didn't last long; and it was before I knew you, Hedda. But fancy her being in town!

HEDDA. It's odd that she should call upon us. I have scarcely seen her since we left school.

TESMAN. I haven't seen her either for—heaven knows how long. I wonder how she can endure to live in such an out-of-the-way hole—eh?

HEDDA [*after a moment's thought says suddenly*]. Tell me, Tesman—isn't it somewhere near there that he—that—Eilert Lövborg is living?

TESMAN. Yes, he is somewhere in that part of the country.

[BERTA enters by the hall door.]

BERTA. That lady, ma'am, that brought some flowers a little while ago, is here again. [*Pointing.*] The flowers in your hand, ma'am.

HEDDA. Ah, is she? Well, please show her in.

[BERTA opens the door for MRS. ELVSTED, and goes out herself.—MRS. ELVSTED is a woman of fragile figure, with pretty, soft features. Her eyes are light blue, large, round, and somewhat prominent, with a startled, inquiring expression. Her hair is remarkably light, almost flaxen, and unusually abundant and wavy. She is a couple of years younger than HEDDA. She wears a dark visiting dress, tasteful, but not quite in the latest fashion.]

HEDDA [*receives her warmly*]. How do you do, my dear Mrs. Elvsted? It's delightful to see you again.

MRS. ELVSTED [*nervously, struggling for self-control*]. Yes, it's a very long time since we met.

TESMAN [*gives her his hand*]. And we too—eh?

HEDDA. Thanks for your lovely flowers—

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, not at all—I would have come straight here yesterday afternoon; but I heard that you were away—

TESMAN. Have you just come to town? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. I arrived yesterday, about midday. Oh, I was quite in despair when I heard that you were not at home.

HEDDA. In despair! How so?

TESMAN. Why, my dear Mrs. Rysing—I mean Mrs. Elvsted—

HEDDA. I hope that you are not in any trouble?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I am. And I don't know another living creature here that I can turn to.

HEDDA [*laying the bouquet on the table*]. Come—let us sit here on the sofa—

MRS. ELVSTED. I am too restless to sit down.

HEDDA. Oh no, you're not. Come here. [*She draws MRS. ELVSTED down upon the sofa and sits at her side.*]

TESMAN. Well? What is it, Mrs. Elvsted?

HEDDA. Has anything particular happened to you at home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and no. Oh—I am so anxious you should not misunderstand me—

HEDDA. Then your best plan is to tell us the whole story, Mrs. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I suppose that's what you have come for—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes—of course it is. Well then, I must tell you—if you don't already know—that Eilert Lövborg is in town, too.

HEDDA. Lövborg—!

TESMAN. What! Has Eilert Lövborg come back? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Well, well—I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. He has been here a week already. Just fancy—a whole week! In this terrible town, alone! With so many temptations on all sides.

HEDDA. But my dear Mrs. Elvsted—how does he concern you so much?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her with a startled air, and says rapidly*]. He was the children's tutor.

HEDDA. Your children's?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband's. I have none.

HEDDA. Oh! Your step-children's!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

TESMAN [*somewhat hesitatingly*]. Then was he—I don't know how to express it—was he—regular enough in his habits to be fit for the post? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. For the last two years his conduct has been irreproachable.

TESMAN. Has it indeed? Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. I hear it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Perfectly irreproachable, I assure you! In every respect. But all the same—now that I know he is here—in this great town—and with a large sum of money in his hands—I can't help being in mortal fear for him.

TESMAN. Why did he not remain where he was? With you and your husband? Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. After his book was published he was too restless and unsettled to remain with us.

TESMAN. Yes, by-the-bye, Aunt Julia told me he had published a new book.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, a big book, dealing with the march of civilisation—in broad outline, as it were. It came out about a fortnight ago. And since it has sold so well, and been so much read—and made such a sensation—

TESMAN. Has it indeed? It must be something he has had lying by since his better days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Long ago, you mean?

TESMAN. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he has written it all since he has been with us—within the last year.

TESMAN. Isn't that good news, Hedda? Think of that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah, yes, if only it would last!

HEDDA. Have you seen him here in town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not yet. I have had the greatest difficulty in finding out his address. But this morning I discovered it.

HEDDA [*looks searchingly at her*]. Do you know, it seems to me a little odd of your husband—h'm——

MRS. ELVSTED [*starting nervously*]. Of my husband! What?

HEDDA. That he should send you to town on such an errand—that he does not come himself and look after his friend.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—my husband has no time. And besides, I—I had some shopping to do.

HEDDA [*with a slight smile*]. Ah, that is a different matter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*rising quickly and uneasily*]. And now I beg and implore you, Mr. Tesman—receive Eilert Lövborg kindly if he comes to you! And that he is sure to do. You see you were such great friends in the old days. And then you are interested in the same studies—the same branch of science—so far as I can understand.

TESMAN. We used to be, at any rate.

MRS. ELVSTED. That is why I beg so earnestly that you—you too—will keep a sharp eye upon him. You will promise me that, Mr. Tesman—won't you?

TESMAN. With the greatest of pleasure, Mrs. Rysing—
HEDDA. Elvsted.

TESMAN. I assure you I shall do all I possibly can for Eilert. You may rely upon me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how very, very kind of you! [*Presses his hands.*] Thanks, thanks, thanks! [*Frightened.*] You see, my husband is very fond of him!

HEDDA [*rising*]. You ought to write to him, Tesman. Perhaps he may not care to come to you of his own accord.

TESMAN. Well, perhaps it would be the right thing to do, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. And the sooner the better. Why not at once?

MRS. ELVSTED [*imploringly*]. Oh, if you only would!

TESMAN. I'll write this moment. Have you his address, Mrs.—Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. [*Takes a slip of paper from her pocket, and hands it to him.*] Here it is.

TESMAN. Good, good. I'll go in——[*Looks about him.*] By-the-bye,—my slippers? Oh, here. [*Takes the packet, and is about to go.*]

HEDDA. Be sure you write him a cordial, friendly letter. And a good long one too.

TESMAN. Yes, I will.

MRS. ELVSTED. But please, please don't say a word to show that I have suggested it.

TESMAN. No, how could you think I would? Eh? [*He goes out to the right, through the inner room.*]

HEDDA [*goes up to MRS. ELVSTED, smiles, and says in a low voice*]. There. We have killed two birds with one stone.

MRS. ELVSTED. What do you mean?

HEDDA. Could you not see that I wanted him to go?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, to write the letter—

HEDDA. And that I might speak to you alone?

MRS. ELVSTED [*confused*]. About the same thing?

HEDDA. Precisely.

MRS. ELVSTED [*apprehensively*]. But there is nothing more, Mrs. Tesman! Absolutely nothing!

HEDDA. Oh, yes there is. There is a great deal more—I can see that. Sit here—and we'll have a cosy, confidential chat. [*She forces MRS. ELVSTED to sit in the easy-chair beside the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*anxiously, looking at her watch*]. But, my dear Mrs. Tesman—I was really on the point of going.

HEDDA. Oh, you can't be in such a hurry.—Well? Now tell me something about your life at home.

MRS. ELVSTED. That is just what I care least to speak about.

HEDDA. But to me, dear——? Why, weren't we school-fellows?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but you were in the class above me. How dreadfully afraid of you I was then!

HEDDA. Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, dreadfully. For when we met on the stairs you used always to pull my hair.

HEDDA. Did I, really?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, and once you said you would burn it off my head.

HEDDA. That was all nonsense, of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I was so silly in those days.—And since then—we have drifted so far—far apart from each other. Our circles have been so entirely different.

HEDDA. Well then, we must try to drift together again. Now listen! At school we called each other by our Christian names——

MRS. ELVSTED. No, I am sure you must be mistaken.

HEDDA. Not at all! I can remember quite distinctly. So now we are going to renew our old friendship. [*Draws the footstool closer to MRS. ELVSTED.*] There now! [*Kisses her cheek.*] You must call me Hedda.

MRS. ELVSTED [*presses and pats her hands*]. How good and kind you are! I am not used to such kindness.

HEDDA. There, there, there! As in the old days, I shall call you my dear Thora.

MRS. ELVSTED. My name is Thea.

HEDDA. Of course! I mean Thea. [*Looks at her compassionately.*] So you are not accustomed to goodness and kindness, Thea? Not in your own home?

MRS. ELVSTED. If I only had a home? But I haven't any; I have never had a home.

HEDDA [*looks at her for a moment*]. I almost suspected as much.

MRS. ELVSTED [*gazing helplessly before her*]. Yes—yes—yes.

HEDDA. I don't quite remember—was it not as housekeeper that you first went to Mr. Elvsted's?

MRS. ELVSTED. I really went as governess. But his wife—his late wife—was an invalid—and rarely left her rooms. So I had to look after the housekeeping as well.

HEDDA. And then—at last—you became mistress of the house.

MRS. ELVSTED [*sadly*]. Yes, I did.

HEDDA. Let me see—about how long ago was that?

MRS. ELVSTED. My marriage?

HEDDA. Yes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Five years ago.

HEDDA. To be sure; it must be that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, those five years——! Or at all events the last two or three years of them! If you could only imagine——

HEDDA [*lightly*]. Eilert Lövborg has been in your neighbourhood about three years, hasn't he?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her doubtfully*]. Eilert Lövborg? Yes—he has.

HEDDA. Had you known him before, in town here?

MRS. ELVSTED. Scarcely at all. I mean—I knew him by name, of course.

HEDDA. But you saw a good deal of him in the country?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, he came to us every day. You see, he gave the children lessons; for in the long run I couldn't manage it all myself.

HEDDA. No, that's clear.—And your husband——? I suppose he is often away from home?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes. Being sheriff, you know, he has to travel about a good deal in his district.

HEDDA [*leaning against the arm of the chair*]. Thea—my poor, sweet Thea—now you must tell me everything—exactly as it stands.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well then, you must question me.

HEDDA. What sort of a man is your husband, Thea? I mean—in everyday life. Is he kind to you?

MRS. ELVSTED [*evasively*]. I am sure he means well in everything.

HEDDA. I should think he must be altogether too old for you. There is at least twenty years' difference between you, is there not?

MRS. ELVSTED [*irritably*]. Yes, that is true, too. Everything about him is repellent to me! We have not a thought in common. We have no single point of sympathy—he and I.

HEDDA. But is he not fond of you all the same? In his own way?

MRS. ELVSTED. I really don't know. I think he regards me simply as a useful property. And then it doesn't cost much to keep me. I am not expensive.

HEDDA. That is stupid of you.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shakes her head*]. It cannot be otherwise—not with him. I don't think he really cares for any one but himself—and perhaps a little for the children.

HEDDA. And for Eilert Lövborg, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*looking at her*]. For Eilert Lövborg? What puts that into your head?

HEDDA. Well, my dear—I should say, when he sends you after him all the way to town—[*Smiling almost imperceptibly*.] And besides, you said so yourself, to Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*with a little nervous twitch*]. Did I? Yes, I suppose I did. [*Vehemently, but not loudly*.] No—I may just as well make a clean breast of it at once! For it must all come out in any case.

HEDDA. Why, my dear Thea——?

MRS. ELVSTED. My husband did not know I was coming.

HEDDA. What! Your husband didn't know it!

MRS. ELVSTED. No! For that matter, he was away from home himself—travelling. Oh, I could bear it no longer, Hedda! I couldn't indeed—so utterly alone as I should have been in future.

HEDDA. Well? And then?

MRS. ELVSTED. So I put together some of my things—what I needed most—as quietly as possible. And I left the house.

HEDDA. Without a word?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes—and took the train straight to town.

HEDDA. My dear, good Thea—to think of you daring to do it!

MRS. ELVSTED [*rises and moves about the room*]. What else could I possibly do?

HEDDA. But what do you think your husband will say when you go home again?

MRS. ELVSTED [*at the table, looks at her*]. Back to him?

HEDDA. Of course.

MRS. ELVSTED. I shall never go back to him.

HEDDA [*rising and going towards her*]. Then you have left your home—for good and all?

MRS. ELVSTED. There was nothing else to be done.

HEDDA. But to—to take flight so openly.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, it's impossible to keep things of that sort secret.

HEDDA. And what do you think people will say of you, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. They may say what they like, for aught I care. [*Sits herself wearily and sadly on the sofa.*] I have done nothing but what I had to do.

HEDDA [*after a short silence*]. And what are your plans now? What do you think of doing?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. I only know this, that I must live here, where Eilert Lövborg is—if I am to live at all.

HEDDA [*takes a chair from the table, seats herself beside her, and strokes her hands*]. My dear Thea—how did this—this

friendship—between you and Eilert Lövborg come about?

MRS. ELVSTED. It grew up gradually. I gained a sort of influence over him.

HEDDA. Indeed?

MRS. ELVSTED. He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to, for I never dared do that. But of course he saw how repulsive they were to me; and he dropped them.

HEDDA [*concealing an involuntary smile of scorn*]. Then you have reclaimed him—as the saying goes—my little Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. So he says himself. And he, on his side, has made a real human being of me—taught me to think, and to understand so many things.

HEDDA. Did he give you lessons too, then?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not exactly lessons. But he talked to me—talked about such an infinity of things. And then came the lovely, happy time when I began to share in his work—when he allowed me to help him!

HEDDA. Oh, he did, did he?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! He never wrote anything without my assistance.

HEDDA. You were two good comrades, in fact?

MRS. ELVSTED [*eagerly*]. Comrades! Yes, fancy, Hedda—that is the very word he used!—Oh, I ought to feel perfectly happy; and yet I cannot; for I don't know how long it will last.

HEDDA. Are you no surer of him than that?

MRS. ELVSTED [*gloomily*]. A woman's shadow stands between Eilert Lövborg and me.

HEDDA [*looks at her anxiously*]. Who can that be?

MRS. ELVSTED. I don't know. Some one he knew in his—in his past. Some one he has never been able wholly to forget.

HEDDA. What has he told you—about this?

MRS. ELVSTED. He has only once—quite vaguely—alluded to it.

HEDDA. Well! And what did he say?

MRS. ELVSTED. He said that when they parted, she threatened to shoot him with a pistol.

HEDDA [*with cold composure*]. Oh, nonsense! No one does that sort of thing here.

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And that is why I think it must have been that red-haired singing woman whom he once——

HEDDA. Yes, very likely.

MRS. ELVSTED. For I remember they used to say of her that she carried loaded firearms.

HEDDA. Oh—then of course it must have been she.

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. And now just fancy, Hedda—I hear that this singing-woman—that she is in town again! Oh, I don't know what to do——

HEDDA [*glancing towards the inner room*]. Hush! Here comes Tesman. [*Rises and whispers.*] Thea—all this must remain between you and me.

MRS. ELVSTED [*springing up*]. Oh, yes, yes! for heaven's sake——!

[GEORGE TESMAN, *with a letter in his hand*, comes from the right through the inner room.]

TESMAN. There now—the epistle is finished.

HEDDA. That's right. And now Mrs. Elvsted is just going. Wait a minute—I'll go with you to the garden gate.

TESMAN. Do you think Berta could post the letter, Hedda dear?

HEDDA [*takes it*]. I will tell her to.

[BERTA enters from the hall.]

BERTA. Judge Brack wishes to know if Mrs. Tesman will receive him.

HEDDA. Yes, ask Judge Brack to come in. And look here—put this letter in the post.

BERTA [*taking the letter*]. Yes, ma'am.

[*She opens the door for JUDGE BRACK and goes out herself.* BRACK is a man of forty-five; thick-set, but well-built and elastic in his movements. His face is roundish with an aristocratic profile. His hair is short, still almost black, and carefully dressed. His eyes are lively and sparkling. His eyebrows thick.

His moustaches are also thick, with short-cut ends. He wears a well-cut walking-suit, a little too youthful for his age. He uses an eye-glass, which he now and then lets drop.]

JUDGE BRACK [*with his hat in his hand, bowing*]. May one venture to call so early in the day?

HEDDA. Of course one may.

TESMAN [*presses his hand*]. You are welcome at any time. [*Introducing him.*] Judge Brack—Miss Rysing——

HEDDA. Oh——!

BRACK [*bowing*]. Ah—delighted——

HEDDA [*looks at him and laughs*]. It's nice to have a look at you by daylight, Judge!

BRACK. Do you find me—altered?

HEDDA. A little younger, I think.

BRACK. Thank you so much.

TESMAN. But what do you think of Hedda—eh? Doesn't she look flourishing? She has actually——

HEDDA. Oh, do leave me alone. You haven't thanked Judge Brack for all the trouble he has taken——

BRACK. Nonsense—it was a pleasure to me——

HEDDA. Yes, you are a friend indeed. But here stands Mrs. Elvsted, all impatience to be off—*au revoir*, Judge. I shall be back again presently. [*Mutual salutations. MRS. ELVSTED and HEDDA go out by the hall door.*]

BRACK. Well,—is your wife tolerably satisfied?——

TESMAN. Yes, we can't thank you sufficiently. Of course, she talks of a little re-arrangement here and there; and one or two things are still wanting. We shall have to buy some additional trifles.

BRACK. Indeed!

TESMAN. But we won't trouble you about these things. Hedda says she herself will look after what is needed.—Shan't we sit down? Eh?

BRACK. Thanks, for a moment. [*Seats himself beside the table.*] There is something I wanted to speak to you about, my dear Tesman.

TESMAN. Indeed? Ah, I understand! [*Seating himself.*]

I suppose it's the serious part of the frolic that is coming now. Eh?

BRACK. Oh, the money question is not so very pressing; though, for that matter, I wish we had gone a little more economically to work.

TESMAN. But that would never have done, you know! Think of Hedda, my dear fellow! You, who know her so well——. I couldn't possibly ask her to put up with a shabby style of living!

BRACK. No, no—that is just the difficulty.

TESMAN. And then—fortunately—it can't be long before I receive my appointment.

BRACK. Well, you see—such things are often apt to hang fire for a time.

TESMAN. Have you heard anything definite? Eh?

BRACK. Nothing exactly definite—— [*Interrupting himself.*] But, by-the-bye—I have one piece of news for you.

TESMAN. Well?

BRACK. Your old friend, Eilert Lövborg, has returned to town.

TESMAN. I know that already.

BRACK. Indeed! How did you learn it?

TESMAN. From the lady who went out with Hedda.

BRACK. Really? What was her name? I didn't quite catch it.

TESMAN. Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. Aha—Sheriff Elvsted's wife? Of course—he has been living up in their regions.

TESMAN. And fancy—I'm delighted to hear that he is quite a reformed character!

BRACK. So they say.

TESMAN. And then he has published a new book—eh?

BRACK. Yes, indeed he has.

TESMAN. And I hear it has made some sensation!

BRACK. Quite an unusual sensation.

TESMAN. Fancy— isn't that good news! A man of such extraordinary talents—— I felt so grieved to think that he had gone irretrievably to ruin.

BRACK. That was what everybody thought.

TESMAN. But I cannot imagine what he will take to now! How in the world will he be able to make his living? Eh?

[*During the last words, HEDDA has entered by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*to BRACK, laughing with a touch of scorn*]. Tesman is forever worrying about how people are to make their livings.

TESMAN. Well, you see, dear—we were talking about poor Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA [*glancing at him rapidly*]. Oh, indeed? [*Seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove and asks indifferently*]: What is the matter with him?

TESMAN. Well—no doubt he has run through all his property long ago; and he can scarcely write a new book every year—eh? So I really can't see what is to become of him.

BRACK. Perhaps I can give you some information on that point.

TESMAN. Indeed!

BRACK. You must remember that his relations have a good deal of influence.

TESMAN. Oh, his relations, unfortunately, have entirely washed their hands of him.

BRACK. At one time they called him the hope of the family.

TESMAN. At one time, yes! But he has put an end to all that.

HEDDA. Who knows? [*With a slight smile.*] I hear they have reclaimed him up at Sheriff Elvsted's—

BRACK. And then this book that he has published—

TESMAN. Well, well, I hope to goodness they may find something for him to do. I have just written to him. I asked him to come and see us this evening, Hedda dear.

BRACK. But, my dear fellow, you are booked for my bachelors' party this evening. You promised on the pier last night.

HEDDA. Had you forgotten, Tesman?

TESMAN. Yes, I had utterly forgotten.

BRACK. But it doesn't matter, for you may be sure he won't come.

TESMAN. What makes you think that? Eh?

BRACK [*with a little hesitation, rising and resting his hands on the back of his chair*]. My dear Tesman—and you too, Mrs. Tesman—I think I ought not to keep you in the dark about something that—that——

TESMAN. That concerns Eilert——?

BRACK. Both you and him.

TESMAN. Well, my dear Judge, out with it.

BRACK. You must be prepared to find your appointment deferred longer than you desired or expected.

TESMAN [*jumping up uneasily*]. Is there some hitch about it? Eh?

BRACK. The nomination may perhaps be made conditional on the result of a competition——

TESMAN. Competition! Think of that, Hedda!

HEDDA [*leans farther back in the chair*]. Aha—aha!

TESMAN. But who can my competitor be? Surely not——?

BRACK. Yes, precisely—Eilert Lövborg.

TESMAN [*clapping his hands*]. No, no—it's quite inconceivable! Quite impossible! Eh?

BRACK. H'm—that is what it may come to, all the same.

TESMAN. Well but, Judge Brack—it would show the most incredible lack of consideration for me. [*Gesticulates with his arms.*] For—just think—I'm a married man. We have been married on the strength of these prospects, Hedda and I; and run deep into debt; and borrowed money from Aunt Julia too. Good heavens, they had as good as promised me the appointment. Eh?

BRACK. Well, well, well—no doubt you will get it in the end; only after a contest.

HEDDA [*immovable in her arm-chair*]. Fancy, Tesman, there will be a sort of sporting interest in that.

TESMAN. Why, my dearest Hedda, how can you be so indifferent about it.

HEDDA [*as before*]. I am not at all indifferent. I am most eager to see who wins.

BRACK. In any case, Mrs. Tesman, it is best that you should know how matters stand. I mean—before you set about the little purchases I hear you are threatening.

HEDDA. This can make no difference.

BRACK. Indeed! Then I have no more to say. Good-bye! [To TESMAN.] I shall look in on my way back from my afternoon walk, and take you home with me.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—your news has quite upset me.

HEDDA [*reclining, holds out her hand*]. Good-bye, Judge; and be sure you call in the afternoon.

BRACK. Many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye!

TESMAN [*accompanying him to the door*]. Good-bye, my dear Judge! You must really excuse me——

[JUDGE BRACK goes out by the hall door.]

TESMAN [*crosses the room*]. Oh, Hedda—one should never rush into adventures. Eh?

HEDDA [*looks at him, smilingly*]. Do you do that?

TESMAN. Yes, dear—there is no denying—it was adventurous to go and marry and set up house upon mere expectations.

HEDDA. Perhaps you are right there.

TESMAN. Well—at all events, we have our delightful home, Hedda! Fancy, the home we both dreamed of—the home we were in love with, I may almost say. Eh?

HEDDA [*rising slowly and wearily*]. It was part of our compact that we were to go into society—to keep open house.

TESMAN. Yes, if you only knew how I had been looking forward to it! Fancy—to see you as hostess—in a select circle? Eh? Well, well, well—for the present we shall have to get on without society, Hedda—only to invite Aunt Julia now and then.—Oh, I intended you to lead such an utterly different life, dear——!

HEDDA. Of course I cannot have my man in livery just yet.

TESMAN. Oh no, unfortunately. It would be out of the question for us to keep a footman, you know.

HEDDA. And the saddle-horse I was to have had——

TESMAN [*aghast*]. The saddle-horse!

HEDDA. —I suppose I must not think of that now.

TESMAN. Good heavens, no!—that's as clear as daylight.

HEDDA [*goes up to the room*]. Well, I shall have one thing at least to kill time with in the meanwhile.

TESMAN [*beaming*]. Oh, thank heaven for that! What is it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*in the middle doorway, looks at him with covert scorn*]. My pistols, George.

TESMAN [*in alarm*]. Your pistols!

HEDDA [*with cold eyes*]. General Gabler's pistols. [*She goes out through the inner room, to the left.*]

TESMAN [*rushes up to the middle doorway and calls after her.*] No, for heaven's sake, Hedda darling—don't touch those dangerous things! For my sake, Hedda! Eh?

ACT II

SCENE.—*The room at the TESMANS' as in the first Act, except that the piano has been removed, and an elegant little writing-table with book-shelves put in its place. A smaller table stands near the sofa on the left. Most of the bouquets have been taken away. MRS. ELVSTED's bouquet is upon the large table in front.—It is afternoon.*

[*HEDDA, dressed to receive callers, is alone in the room. She stands by the open glass door, loading a revolver. The fellow to it lies in an open pistol-case on the writing-table.*]

HEDDA [*looks down the garden, and calls*]: So you are here again, Judge!

BRACK [*is heard calling from a distance*]. As you see, Mrs. Tesman!

HEDDA [*raises the pistol and points*]. Now I'll shoot you, Judge Brack!

BRACK [*calling unseen*]. No, no, no! Don't stand aiming at me!

HEDDA. This is what comes of sneaking in by the back way. [*She fires.*]

BRACK [*nearer*]. Are you out of your senses——!

HEDDA. Dear me—did I happen to hit you?

BRACK [*still outside*]. I wish you would let these pranks alone!

HEDDA. Come in then, Judge.

[JUDGE BRACK, *dressed as though for a men's party, enters by the glass door. He carries a light overcoat over his arm.*]

BRACK. What the deuce—haven't you tired of that sport, yet? What are you shooting at?

HEDDA. Oh, I am only firing in the air.

BRACK [*gently takes the pistol out of her hand*]. Allow me, madam! [*Looks at it.*] Ah—I know this pistol well! [*Looks around.*] Where is the case? Here it is. [*Lays the pistol in it, and shuts it.*] Now we won't play at that game any more to-day.

HEDDA. Then what in Heaven's name would you have me do with myself?

BRACK. Have you had no visitors?

HEDDA [*closing the glass door*]. Not one. I suppose all our set are still out of town.

BRACK. And is Tesman not at home either?

HEDDA [*at the writing-table, putting the pistol-case in a drawer which she shuts*]. No. He rushed off to his aunt's directly after luncheon; he didn't expect you so early.

BRACK. H'm—how stupid of me not to have thought of that!

HEDDA [*turning her head to look at him*]. Why stupid?

BRACK. Because if I had thought of it, I should have come a little—earlier.

HEDDA [*crossing the room*]. Then you would have found no one to receive you; for I have been in my room changing my dress ever since luncheon.

BRACK. And is there no sort of little chink that we could have held parley through?

HEDDA. You had forgotten to arrange one.

BRACK. That was another piece of stupidity.

HEDDA. Well, we must just settle down here—and wait. Tesman is not likely to be back for some time yet.

BRACK. Never mind; I shall not be impatient.

[HEDDA seats herself in the corner of the sofa. BRACK lays his overcoat over the back of the nearest chair, and sits down, but keeps his hat in his hand. A short silence. They look at each other.]

HEDDA. Well?

BRACK [*in the same tone*]. Well?

HEDDA. I spoke first.

BRACK [*bending a little forward*]. Come, let us have a cosy little chat, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA [*leaning further back in the sofa*]. Does it not seem like a whole eternity since our last talk? Of course, I don't count those few words yesterday evening and this morning.

BRACK. You mean since our last confidential talk? Our last tête-à-tête?

HEDDA. Well, yes—since you put it so.

BRACK. Not a day has passed but I have wished that you were at home again.

HEDDA. And I have done nothing but wish the same thing.

BRACK. You? Really, Madam Hedda? And I thought you had been enjoying your tour so much!

HEDDA. Oh, yes, you may be sure of that!

BRACK. But Tesman's letters spoke of nothing but happiness.

HEDDA. Oh, Tesman! You see, he thinks nothing so delightful as grubbing in libraries and making copies of old parchments, or whatever you call them.

BRACK [*with a spice of malice*]. That is his vocation in life—or part of it at any rate.

HEDDA. Of course; and no doubt when it's your vocation—— But *II!* Oh, my dear Mr. Brack, how mortally bored I have been.

BRACK [*sympathetically*]. Do you really say so? In downright earnest?

HEDDA. Yes, you can surely understand it——! To go for six whole months without meeting a soul that knew anything

of our group, or could talk about the things we are interested in.

BRACK. Yes, yes—I too should feel that a deprivation.

HEDDA. And then, what I found most intolerable of all——

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. ——was being everlastingly in the company of one and the same person——

BRACK [*with a nod of assent*]. Morning, noon and night, yes—at all possible times and seasons.

HEDDA. I said “everlastingly.”

BRACK. Just so. But I should have thought, with our excellent Tesman, one could——

HEDDA. Tesman is—a specialist, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Undeniably.

HEDDA. And specialists are not at all amusing to travel with. Not in the long run, at any rate.

BRACK. Not even—the specialist one happens to love?

HEDDA. Faugh—don’t use that sickening word!

BRACK [*taken aback*]. What do you say, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA [*half laughing, half irritated*]. You should just try it! To hear of nothing but the history of civilisation, morning, noon, and night——

BRACK. Everlastingly.

HEDDA. Yes, yes, yes! And then all this about the domestic industry of the middle ages——! That’s the most disgusting part of it!

BRACK [*looks searchingly at her*]. In that case, how am I to understand your——? H’m——

HEDDA. My accepting George Tesman?

BRACK. Well, let us put it so.

HEDDA. Good heavens, do you see anything so wonderful in that?

BRACK. Yes and no—Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I had positively danced myself tired, my dear Judge. My day was done—— [*With a slight shudder.*] Oh no—I won’t say that; nor think it either!

BRACK. You have assuredly no reason to.

HEDDA. Oh, reasons—— [*Watching him closely.*] And

George Tesman—after all, you must admit that he is correctness itself.

BRACK. His correctness and respectability are beyond all question.

HEDDA. And I don't see anything absolutely ridiculous about him.—Do you?

BRACK. Ridiculous? N—no—I shouldn't exactly say so——

HEDDA. Well—and his powers of research, at all events, are untiring.—I see no reason why he should not one day come to the front, after all.

BRACK [*looks at her hesitatingly*]. I thought that you, like every one else, expected him to attain the highest distinction.

HEDDA [*with an expression of fatigue*]. Yes, so I did.—And then, since he was bent, at all hazards, on being allowed to provide for me—I really don't know why I should not have accepted his offer?

BRACK. No—if you look at it in that light——

HEDDA. It was more than my other adorers were prepared to do for me, my dear Judge.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Well, I can't answer for all the rest; as for myself, you know quite well that I have always entertained a—a certain respect for the marriage tie—for marriage as an institution, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA [*jestingly*]. I assure you I never cherished any hopes with respect to you.

BRACK. All I require is a pleasant and intimate interior, where I can make myself useful in every way, and am free to come and go as—as a trusted friend——

HEDDA. Of the master of the house, do you mean?

BRACK [*bowing*]. Frankly—of the mistress first of all; but of course of the master, too, in the second place. Such a triangular friendship—if I may call it so—is really a great convenience for all parties, let me tell you.

HEDDA. Yes, I have many a time longed for some one to make a third on our travels. Oh—those railway-carriage tête-à-têtes——!

BRACK. Fortunately your wedding journey is over now.

HEDDA [*shaking her head*]. Not by a long—long way. I have only arrived at a station on the line.

BRACK. Well, then the passengers jump out and move about a little, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. I never jump out.

BRACK. Really?

HEDDA. No—because there is always some one standing by to——

BRACK [*laughing*]. To look at your ankles, do you mean?

HEDDA. Precisely.

BRACK. Well but, dear me——

HEDDA [*with a gesture of repulsion*]. I won't have it. I would rather keep my seat where I happen to be—and continue the tête-à-tête.

BRACK. But suppose a third person were to jump in and join the couple.

HEDDA. Ah—that is quite another matter!

BRACK. A trusted, sympathetic friend——

HEDDA. ——with a fund of conversation on all sorts of lively topics——

BRACK. ——and not the least bit of a specialist!

HEDDA [*with an audible sigh*]. Yes, that would be a relief indeed.

BRACK [*hears the front door open, and glances in that direction*]. The triangle is completed.

HEDDA [*half aloud*]. And on goes the train.

[GEORGE TESMAN, in a grey walking suit, with a soft felt hat, enters from the hall. He has a number of unbound books under his arm and in his pockets.]

TESMAN [*goes up to the table beside the corner settee*]. Ouf—what a load for a warm day—all these books. [*Lays them on the table.*] I'm positively perspiring, Hedda. Hallo—are you there already, my dear Judge? Eh? Berta didn't tell me.

BRACK [*rising*]. I came in through the garden.

HEDDA. What books have you got there?

TESMAN [*stands looking them through*]. Some new books on my special subjects—quite indispensable to me.

HEDDA. Your special subjects?

BRACK. Yes, books on his special subjects, Mrs. Tesman.
[BRACK and HEDDA exchange a confidential smile.]

HEDDA. Do you need still more books on your special subjects?

TESMAN. Yes, my dear Hedda, one can never have too many of them. Of course one must keep up with all that is written and published.

HEDDA. Yes, I suppose one must.

TESMAN [*searching among his books*]. And look here—I have got hold of Eilert Lövborg's new book too. [*Offering it to her.*] Perhaps you would like to glance through it, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA. No, thank you. Or rather—afterwards perhaps.

TESMAN. I looked into it a little on the way home.

BRACK. Well, what do you think of it—as a specialist?

TESMAN. I think it shows quite remarkable soundness of judgment. He never wrote like that before. [*Putting the books together.*] Now I shall take all these into my study. I'm longing to cut the leaves——! And then I must change my clothes. [*To BRACK.*] I suppose we needn't start just yet? Eh?

BRACK. Oh, dear no—there is not the slightest hurry.

TESMAN. Well then, I will take my time. [*Is going with his books, but stops in the doorway and turns.*] By-the-bye, Hedda—Aunt Julia is not coming this evening.

HEDDA. Not coming? Is it that affair of the bonnet that keeps her away?

TESMAN. Oh, not at all. How could you think such a thing of Aunt Julia? Just fancy——! The fact is, Aunt Rina is very ill.

HEDDA. She always is.

TESMAN. Yes, but to-day she is much worse than usual, poor dear.

HEDDA. Oh, then it's only natural that her sister should remain with her. I must bear my disappointment.

TESMAN. And you can't imagine, dear, how delighted Aunt Julia seemed to be—because you had come home looking so flourishing!

HEDDA [*half aloud, rising*]. Those everlasting aunts!

TESMAN. What?

HEDDA [*going to the glass door*]. Nothing.

TESMAN. Oh, all right.

[*He goes through the inner room, out to the right.*]

BRACK. What bonnet were you talking about?

HEDDA. Oh, it was a little episode with Miss Tesman this morning. She had laid down her bonnet on the chair there—[*Looks at him and smiles.*—And I pretended to think it was the servant's.

BRACK [*shaking his head*]. Now my dear Madam Hedda, how could you do such a thing? To that excellent old lady, too!

HEDDA [*nervously crossing the room*]. Well, you see—these impulses come over me all of a sudden; and I cannot resist them. [*Throws herself down in the easy-chair by the stove.*] Oh, I don't know how to explain it.

BRACK [*behind the easy-chair*]. You are not really happy—that is at the bottom of it.

HEDDA [*looking straight before her*]. I know of no reason why I should be—happy. Perhaps you can give me one?

BRACK. Well—among other things, because you have exactly the home you had set your heart on.

HEDDA [*looks up at him and laughs*]. Do you too believe in that legend?

BRACK. Is there nothing in it, then?

HEDDA. Oh, yes, there is something in it.

BRACK. Well?

HEDDA. There is this in it, that I made use of Tesman to see me home from evening parties last summer—

BRACK. I, unfortunately, had to go quite a different way.

HEDDA. That's true. I know you were going a different way last summer.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Oh fie, Madam Hedda! Well, then—you and Tesman——?

HEDDA. We happened to pass here one evening; Tesman, poor fellow, was writhing in the agony of having to find conversation; so I took pity on the learned man——

BRACK [*smiles doubtfully*]. You took pity? H'm——

HEDDA. Yes, I really did. And so—to help him out of his torment—I happened to say, in pure thoughtlessness, that I should like to live in this villa.

BRACK. No more than that?

HEDDA. Not that evening.

BRACK. But afterwards?

HEDDA. Yes, my thoughtlessness had consequences, my dear Judge.

BRACK. Unfortunately that too often happens, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Thanks! So you see it was this enthusiasm for Secretary Falk's villa that first constituted a bond of sympathy between George Tesman and me. From that came our engagement and our marriage, and our wedding journey, and all the rest of it. Well, well, my dear Judge—as you make your bed so you must lie, I could almost say.

BRACK. This is exquisite! And you really cared not a rap about it all the time.

HEDDA. No, heaven knows I didn't.

BRACK. But now? Now that we have made it so homelike for you?

HEDDA. Uh—the rooms all seem to smell of lavender and and dried love-leaves.—But perhaps it's Aunt Julia that has brought that scent with her.

BRACK [*laughing*]. No, I think it must be a legacy from the late Mrs. Secretary Falk.

HEDDA. Yes, there is an odour of mortality about it. It reminds me of a bouquet—the day after the ball. [*Clasps her hands behind her head, leans back in her chair and looks at him.*] Oh, my dear Judge—you cannot imagine how horribly I shall bore myself here.

BRACK. Why should not you, too, find some sort of vocation in life, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. A vocation—that would attract me?

BRACK. If possible, of course.

HEDDA. Heaven knows what sort of vocation that could be. I often wonder whether—[*Breaking off.*] But that would never do either.

BRACK. Who can tell? Let me hear what it is.

HEDDA. Whether I might not get Tesman to go into politics, I mean.

BRACK [*laughing*]. Tesman? No, really now, political life is not the thing for him—not at all in his line.

HEDDA. No, I daresay not.—But if I could get him into it all the same?

BRACK. Why—what satisfaction could you find in that? If he is not fitted for that sort of thing, why should you want to drive him into it?

HEDDA. Because I am bored, I tell you! [*After a pause.*] So you think it quite out of the question that Tesman should ever get into the ministry?

BRACK. H'm—you see, my dear Madam Hedda—to get into the ministry, he would have to be a tolerably rich man.

HEDDA [*rising impatiently*]. Yes, there we have it! It is this genteel poverty I have managed to drop into——! [*Crosses the room.*] That is what makes life so pitiable! So utterly ludicrous!—For that's what it is.

BRACK. Now *I* should say the fault lay elsewhere.

HEDDA. Where, then?

BRACK. You have never gone through any really stimulating experience.

HEDDA. Anything serious, you mean?

BRACK. Yes, you may call it so. But now you may perhaps have one in store.

HEDDA [*tossing her head*]. Oh, you're thinking of the annoyances about this wretched professorship! But that must be Tesman's own affair. I assure you I shall not waste a thought upon it.

BRACK. No, no, I daresay not. But suppose now that what people call—in elegant language—a solemn responsibility were to come upon you? [*Smiling.*] A new responsibility, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA [*angrily*]. Be quiet! Nothing of that sort will ever happen!

BRACK [*warily*]. We will speak of this again a year hence—at the very outside.

HEDDA [*curtly*]. I have no turn for anything of the sort, Judge Brack. No responsibilities for me!

BRACK. Are you so unlike the generality of women as to have no turn for duties which——?

HEDDA [*beside the glass door*]. Oh, be quiet, I tell you!—I often think there is only one thing in the world I have any turn for.

BRACK [*drawing near to her*]. And what is that, if I may ask?

HEDDA [*stands looking out*]. Boring myself to death. Now you know it. [*Turns, looks towards the inner room, and laughs.*] Yes, as I thought! Here comes the Professor.

BRACK [*softly, in a tone of warning*]. Come, come, come, Madam Hedda!

[GEORGE TESMAN, *dressed for the party, with his gloves and hat in his hand, enters from the right through the inner room.*]

TESMAN. Hedda, has no message come from Eilert Lövborg? Eh?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Then, you'll see, he'll be here presently.

BRACK. Do you really think he will come?

TESMAN. I am almost sure of it. For what you were telling us this morning must have been a mere floating rumour.

BRACK. You think so?

TESMAN. At any rate, Aunt Julia said she did not believe for a moment that he would ever stand in my way again. Fancy that!

BRACK. Then, that's all right.

TESMAN [*placing his hat and gloves on a chair on the right*]. But you must let me wait for him as long as possible.

BRACK. We have plenty of time yet. None of my guests will arrive before seven or half-past.

TESMAN. Then meanwhile we can keep Hedda company, and see what happens. Eh?

HEDDA [*placing BRACK'S hat and overcoat upon the corner settee*]. At the worst Mr. Lövborg can remain here with me.

BRACK [*offering to take his things*]. Oh, allow me, Mrs. Tesman!—What do you mean by “At the worst”?

HEDDA. If he won't go with you and Tesman.

TESMAN [*looks dubiously at her*]. But, Hedda dear—do you think it would quite do for him to remain with you? Eh? Remember, Aunt Julia can't come.

HEDDA. No, but Mrs. Elvsted is coming. We three can have a cup of tea together.

TESMAN. Oh, that will be all right.

BRACK [*smiling*]. And that would perhaps be the safest plan for him.

HEDDA. Why so?

BRACK. You know, Mrs. Tesman, how you used to gibe at my little bachelor parties. You declared they were adapted only for men of the strictest principles.

HEDDA. No doubt Mr. Lövborg's principles are strict enough now. A converted sinner——

[BERTA appears at the hall door.]

BERTA. There's a gentleman asking if you are at home, ma'am——

HEDDA. Show him in.

TESMAN [*softly*]. I'm sure it is he! Fancy that!

[EILERT LÖVBORG enters from the hall. He is slim and lean; of the same age as TESMAN, but looks older and somewhat worn-out. His hair and beard are of a blackish brown, his face long and pale, but with patches of colour on the cheek-bones. He is dressed in a well-cut black visiting suit, quite new. He has dark gloves and a silk hat. He stops near the door, and makes a rapid bow, seeming somewhat embarrassed.]

TESMAN [*goes up to him and shakes him warmly by the hand*]. My dear Eilert—so at last we meet again!

EILERT LÖVBORG [*speaks in a subdued voice*]. Thanks for

your letter, Tesman. [*Approaching HEDDA.*] Will you too shake hands with me, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA [*taking his hand*]. I am glad to see you, Mr. Lövborg. [*With a motion of her hand.*] I don't know whether you two gentlemen——?

LÖVBORG [*bowing slightly*]. Judge Brack, I think.

BRACK [*doing likewise*]. Oh, yes—in the old days——

TESMAN [*to LÖVBORG, with his hands on his shoulders*]. You must make yourself entirely at home, Eilert! Mustn't he, Hedda?—For I hear you are going to settle in town again? Eh?

LÖVBORG. Yes, I am.

TESMAN. Quite right, quite right. Let me tell you, I have got hold of your new book; but I haven't had time to read it yet.

LÖVBORG. You may spare yourself the trouble.

TESMAN. Why so?

LÖVBORG. Because there is very little in it.

TESMAN. Just fancy—how can you say so?

BRACK. It has been very much praised, I hear.

LÖVBORG. That was what I wanted; so I put nothing into the book but what everyone would agree with.

BRACK. Very wise of you.

TESMAN. But, my dear Eilert——!

LÖVBORG. For now I mean to win myself a position again—to make a fresh start.

TESMAN [*a little embarrassed*]. Ah, that is what you wish to do? Eh?

LÖVBORG [*smiling, lays down his hat, and draws a packet, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket*]. When this one appears, George Tesman, you will have to read it. For this is the real book—the book I have put my true self into.

TESMAN. Indeed? And what is it?

LÖVBORG. It is the continuation.

TESMAN. The continuation? Of what?

LÖVBORG. Of the book?

TESMAN. Of the other book?

LÖVBORG. Of course.

TESMAN. Why, my dear Eilert—does that not come down to our own days?

LÖVBORG. Yes; and this one deals with the future.

TESMAN. With the future! Good heavens, we know nothing of the future!

LÖVBORG. No; but there is a thing or two to be said about it all the same. [*Opens the packet.*] Look here——

TESMAN. That's not your handwriting.

LÖVBORG. I dictated it. [*Turning over the pages.*] It falls into two sections. The first deals with the civilising forces of the future. And the second—[*running through the pages towards the end*—]—forecasts the probable line of development.

TESMAN. How odd now! I should never have thought of writing anything of that sort.

HEDDA [*at the glass door, drumming on the pane*]. H'm—I daresay not.

LÖVBORG [*replacing the manuscript in its paper and laying the packet on the table*]. I brought it, thinking I might read you a little of it this evening.

TESMAN. That was very good of you, Eilert. But this evening——? [*Looking at BRACK.*] I don't quite see how we can manage it——

LÖVBORG. Well then, some other time. There is no hurry.

BRACK. I must tell you, Mr. Lövborg—there is a little gathering at my house this evening—mainly in honour of Tesman, you know——

LÖVBORG [*looking for his hat*]. Then I won't detain you——

BRACK. But listen—will you not do me the favour of joining us?

LÖVBORG [*curtly and decidedly*]. No, I can't—thank you very much.

BRACK. Oh, nonsense—do! We shall be quite a select little circle. And I assure you we will have a “lively time,” as Madam—— as Mrs. Tesman says.

LÖVBORG. I have no doubt of it. Nevertheless——

BRACK. You might bring your manuscript with you, and

read it to Tesman at my house. I could give you a room to yourselves.

TESMAN. Yes, think of that, Eilert—why shouldn't you? Eh?

HEDDA [*interposing*]. But Tesman, if Mr. Lövborg would really rather not! I am sure Mr. Lövborg is much more inclined to remain here and have supper with me.

LÖVBORG [*looking at her*]. With you, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA. And Mrs. Elvsted.

LÖVBORG. Ah—— [*Lightly*]. I saw her for a moment this morning.

HEDDA. Did you? Well, she is coming this evening. So you see you are almost bound to remain, Mr. Lövborg, or she will have no one to see her home.

LÖVBORG. That's true. Many thanks, Mrs. Tesman—in that case I will remain.

HEDDA. Then I have one or two orders to give the servant——

[*She goes to the hall door and rings. BERTA enters.*

HEDDA *talks to her in a whisper, and points toward the inner room. BERTA nods and goes out again.*]

TESMAN [*at the same time, to LÖVBORG*]. Tell me, Eilert—is it this new subject—the future—that you are going to lecture about?

LÖVBORG. Yes.

TESMAN. They told me at the bookseller's that you are going to deliver a course of lectures this autumn.

LÖVBORG. That is my intention. I hope you won't take it ill, Tesman.

TESMAN. Oh no, not in the least——

LÖVBORG. I can quite understand that it must be disagreeable to you.

TESMAN [*cast down*]. I can't expect you, out of consideration for me to——

LÖVBORG. But I shall wait till you have received your appointment.

TESMAN. Will you wait? But—but—are you not going to compete with me? Eh?

LÖVBORG. No; it is only the moral victory I care for.

TESMAN. Why, bless me—then Aunt Julia was right after all! Oh I knew it! Hedda! Just fancy—Eilert Lövborg is not going to stand in our way!

HEDDA [*curtly*]. Our way? Pray leave me out of the question.

[*She goes up towards the inner room, where BERTA is placing a tray with decanters and glasses on the table.*

HEDDA *nods approval, and comes forward again.*

BERTA *goes out.*]

TESMAN [*at the same time*]. And you, Judge Brack—what do you say to this? Eh?

BRACK. I say that a moral victory—h'm—may be all very fine——

TESMAN. Certainly. But all the same——

HEDDA [*looking at TESMAN with a cold smile*]. You stand there looking as if you were thunderstruck——

TESMAN. So I am—I almost think——

BRACK. Don't you see, Mrs. Tesman, a thunderstorm has just passed over?

HEDDA [*pointing towards the inner room*]. Will you not take a glass of cold punch, gentlemen?

BRACK [*looking at his watch*]. A stirrup-cup? Yes, it wouldn't come amiss.

TESMAN. A capital idea, Hedda! Just the thing! Now that the weight has been taken off my mind——

HEDDA. Will you not join them, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG [*with a gesture of refusal*]. No, thank you. Nothing for me.

BRACK. Why, bless me—cold punch is surely not poison.

LÖVBORG. Perhaps not for every one.

HEDDA. I will keep Mr. Lövborg company in the meantime.

TESMAN. Yes, yes, Hedda, dear, do.

[*He and BRACK go into the inner room, seat themselves, drink punch, smoke cigarettes, and carry on a lively conversation during what follows.* EILERT LÖVBORG

remains beside the stove. HEDDA goes to the writing-table.]

HEDDA [*raising her voice a little*]. Do you care to look at some photographs, Mr. Lövborg? You know Tesman and I made a tour in the Tyrol on our way home?

[She takes up an album, and places it on the table beside the sofa, in the further corner of which she seats herself. EILERT LÖVBORG approaches, stops, and looks at her. Then he takes a chair and seats himself at her left, with his back towards the inner room.]

HEDDA [*opening the album*]. Do you see this range of mountains, Mr. Lövborg? It's the Ortler group. Tesman has written the name underneath. Here it is: "The Ortler group near Meran."

LÖVBORG [*who has never taken his eyes off her, says softly and slowly*]. Hedda—Gabler!

HEDDA [*glancing hastily at him*]. Ah! Hush!

LÖVBORG [*repeats softly*]. Hedda Gabler!

HEDDA [*looking at the album*]. That was my name in the old days—when we two knew each other.

LÖVBORG. And I must teach myself never to say Hedda Gabler again—never, as long as I live.

HEDDA [*still turning over the pages*]. Yes, you must. I think you ought to practice in time. The sooner the better, I should say.

LÖVBORG [*in a tone of indignation*]. Hedda Gabler married? And married to—George Tesman!

HEDDA. Yes—so the world goes.

LÖVBORG. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you throw yourself away!

HEDDA [*looks sharply at him*]. What? I can't allow this!

LÖVBORG. What do you mean?

[TESMAN comes into the room and goes toward the sofa.]

HEDDA [*hears him coming and says in an indifferent tone*]. And this is a view from the Val d'Ampezzo, Mr. Lövborg. Just look at these peaks! [*Looks affectionately up at TESMAN.*] What's the name of these curious peaks, dear?

TESMAN. Let me see. Oh, those are the Dolomites.

HEDDA. Yes, that's it!—Those are the Dolomites, Mr. Lövborg.

TESMAN. Hedda, dear,—I only wanted to ask whether I shouldn't bring you a little punch after all? For yourself at any rate—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, do, please; and perhaps a few biscuits.

TESMAN. No cigarettes?

HEDDA. No.

TESMAN. Very well.

[*He goes into the inner room and out to the right.*

BRACK *sits in the inner room, and keeps an eye from time to time on HEDDA and LÖVBORG.*]

LÖVBORG [*softly, as before*]. Answer me, Hedda—how could you do this?

Don't you love George Tesman?

HEDDA [*glances at him and smiles*]. Love? What an idea?

LÖVBORG. You don't love him, then!

HEDDA. But I won't hear of any sort of unfaithfulness! Remember that.

LÖVBORG. Hedda—answer me one thing—

HEDDA. Hush!

[*TESMAN enters with a small tray from the inner room.*]

TESMAN. Here you are! Isn't this tempting?

[*He puts the tray on the table.*]

HEDDA. Why do you bring it yourself?

TESMAN [*filling the glasses*]. Because I think it's such fun to wait upon you, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you have poured out two glasses. Mr. Lövborg said he wouldn't have any—

TESMAN. No, but Mrs. Elvsted will soon be here, won't she?

HEDDA. Yes, by-the-bye?—Mrs. Elvsted—

TESMAN. Had you forgotten her? Eh?

HEDDA. We were so absorbed in these photographs. [*Shows him a picture.*] Do you remember this little village?

TESMAN. Oh, it's that one just below the Brenner Pass. It was there we passed the night—

HEDDA. —and met that lively party of tourists.

TESMAN. Yes, that was the place. Fancy—if we could only have had you with us, Eilert! Eh?

[*He returns to the inner room and sits beside BRACK.*]

LÖVBORG. Answer me this one thing, Hedda—

HEDDA. Well?

LÖVBORG. Was there no love in your friendship for me either? Not a spark—not a tinge of love in it?

HEDDA. I wonder if there was? To me it seems as though we were two good comrades—two thoroughly intimate friends. [*Smilingly.*] You especially were frankness itself.

LÖVBORG. It was you that made me so.

HEDDA. As I look back upon it all, I think there was really something beautiful, something fascinating—something daring—in—in that secret intimacy—that comradeship which no living creature so much as dreamed of.

LÖVBORG. Yes, yes, Hedda! Was there not?—When I used to come to your father's in the afternoon—and the General sat over at the window reading his papers—with his back towards us—

HEDDA. And we two on the corner sofa—

LÖVBORG. Always with the same illustrated paper before us—

HEDDA. For want of an album, yes.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda, and when I made my confessions to you—told you about myself, things that at that time no one else knew! There I would sit and tell you of my escapades—my days and nights of devilment. Oh, Hedda—what was the power in you that forced me to confess these things?

HEDDA. Do you think it was any power in me?

LÖVBORG. How else can I explain it? And all those—those roundabout questions you used to put to me—

HEDDA. Which you understood so particularly well—

LÖVBORG. How could you sit and question me like that? Question me quite frankly—

HEDDA. In roundabout terms, please observe.

LÖVBORG. Yes, but frankly, nevertheless. Cross-question me about—all that sort of thing?

HEDDA. And how could you answer, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. Yes, that is just what I can't understand—in looking back upon it. But tell me now, Hedda—was there not love at the bottom of our friendship? On your side, did you not feel as though you might purge my stains away if I made you my confessor? Was it not so?

HEDDA. No, not quite.

LÖVBORG. What was your motive, then?

HEDDA. Do you think it quite incomprehensible that a young girl—when it can be done—without any one knowing—

LÖVBORG. Well?

HEDDA. —should be glad to have a peep, now and then, into a world which—

LÖVBORG. Which—?

HEDDA. —which she is forbidden to know anything about?

LÖVBORG. So that was it?

HEDDA. Partly. Partly—I almost think.

LÖVBORG. Comradeship in the thirst for life. But why should not that, at any rate, have continued?

HEDDA. The fault was yours.

LÖVBORG. It was you that broke with me.

HEDDA. Yes, when our friendship threatened to develop into something more serious. Shame upon you, Eilert Lövborg! How could you think of wronging your—your frank comrade?

LÖVBORG [*clenching his hands*]. Oh, why did you not carry out your threat? Why did you not shoot me down?

HEDDA. Because I have such a dread of scandal.

LÖVBORG. Yes, Hedda, you are a coward at heart.

HEDDA. A terrible coward. [*Changing her tone.*] But it was a lucky thing for you. And now you have found ample consolation at the Elvsted's.

LÖVBORG. I know what Thea has confided to you.

HEDDA. And perhaps you have confided to her something about us?

LÖVBORG. Not a word. She is too stupid to understand anything of that sort.

HEDDA. Stupid?

LÖVBORG. She is stupid about matters of that sort.

HEDDA. And I am cowardly. [*Bends over towards him, without looking him in the face, and says more softly:*] But now I will confide something to you.

LÖVBORG [*eagerly*]. Well?

HEDDA. The fact that I dared not shoot you down—

LÖVBORG. Yes!

HEDDA. —that was not my most arrant cowardice—that evening.

LÖVBORG [*looks at her a moment, understands, and whispers passionately*]. Oh, Hedda! Hedda Gabler! Now I begin to see a hidden reason beneath our comradeship? You and I——! After all, then, it was your craving for life—

HEDDA [*softly, with a sharp glance*]. Take care! Believe nothing of the sort!

[*Twilight has begun to fall. The hall door is opened from without by BERTA.*]

HEDDA [*closes the album with a bang and calls smilingly*]: Ah, at last! My darling Thea,—come along!

[*MRS. ELVSTED enters from the hall. She is in evening dress. The door is closed behind her.*]

HEDDA [*on the sofa, stretches out her arms towards her*]. My sweet Thea—you can't think how I have been longing for you!

[*MRS. ELVSTED, in passing, exchanges slight salutations with the gentlemen in the inner room, then goes up to the table and gives HEDDA her hands. EILERT LÖVBORG has risen. He and MRS. ELVSTED greet each other with a silent nod.*]

MRS. ELVSTED. Ought I to go in and talk to your husband for a moment?

HEDDA. Oh, not at all. Leave those two alone. They will soon be going.

MRS. ELVSTED. Are they going out?

HEDDA. Yes, to a supper-party.

MRS. ELVSTED [*quickly to LÖVBORG*]. Not you?

LÖVBORG. No.

HEDDA. Mr. Lövborg remains with us.

MRS. ELVSTED [*takes a chair and is about to seat herself at his side*]. Oh, how nice it is here!

HEDDA. No, thank you, my little Thea! Not there! You'll be good enough to come over here to me. I will sit between you.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, just as you please.

[*She goes round the table and seats herself on the sofa on HEDDA's right. LÖVBORG reseats himself the other side of HEDDA.*]

LÖVBORG [*after a short pause, to HEDDA*]. Is she not lovely to look at?

HEDDA [*lightly stroking her hair*]. Only to look at?

LÖVBORG. Yes. For we two—she and I—we are two *real* comrades. We have absolute faith in each other; so we can sit and talk with perfect frankness——

HEDDA. Not round about, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. Well——

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly clinging close to HEDDA*]. Oh, how happy I am, Hedda; for, only think, he says I have inspired him, too.

HEDDA [*looks at her with a smile*]. Ah! Does he say that, dear?

LÖVBORG. And then she is so brave, Mrs. Tesman!

MRS. ELVSTED. Good heavens—am I brave?

LÖVBORG. Exceedingly—where your comrade is concerned.

HEDDA. Ah yes—courage! If one only had that!

LÖVBORG. What then? What do you mean?

HEDDA. Then life would perhaps be liveable, after all. [*With a sudden change of tone.*] But now, my dearest Thea, you really must have a glass of cold punch.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, thanks—I never take anything of that kind.

HEDDA. Well, then, you, Mr. Lövborg.

LÖVBORG. Nor I, thank you.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he doesn't either.

HEDDA [*looks fixedly at him*]. But if I say you shall?

LÖVBORG. It would be no use.

HEDDA [*laughing*]. Then I, poor creature, have no sort of power over you?

LÖVBORG. Not in that respect.

HEDDA. But seriously, I think you ought to—for your own sake.

MRS. ELVSTED. Why, Hedda——!

LÖVBORG. How so?

HEDDA. Or rather on account of other people.

LÖVBORG. Indeed?

HEDDA. Otherwise people might be apt to suspect that—in your heart of hearts—you did not feel quite secure—quite confident of yourself.

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh please, Hedda—.

LÖVBORG. People may suspect what they like—for the present.

MRS. ELVSTED [*joyfully*]. Yes, let them!

HEDDA. I saw it plainly in Judge Brack's face a moment ago.

LÖVBORG. What did you see?

HEDDA. His contemptuous smile, when you dared not go with them into the inner room.

LÖVBORG. Dared not? Of course I preferred to stop here and talk to you.

MRS. ELVSTED. What could be more natural, Hedda?

HEDDA. But the Judge could not guess that. And I saw, too, the way he smiled and glanced at Tesman when you dared not accept his invitation to this wretched little supper-party of his.

LÖVBORG. Dared not! Do you say I dared not?

HEDDA. I don't say so. But that was how Judge Brack understood it.

LÖVBORG. Well, let him.

HEDDA. Then you are not going with them?

LÖVBORG. I will stay here with you and Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, Hedda—how can you doubt that?

HEDDA [*smiles and nods approvingly to LöVBORG*]. Firm as a rock! Faithful to your principles, now and forever! Ah, that is how a man should be! [*Turns to MRS. ELVSTED and caresses her.*] Well now, what did I tell you, when you came to us this morning in such a state of distraction—

LÖVBORG [*surprised*]. Distraction!

MRS. ELVSTED [*terrified*]. Hedda—oh Hedda——!

HEDDA. You can see for yourself; you haven't the slightest reason to be in such mortal terror——[*Interrupting herself.*] There! Now we can all three enjoy ourselves!

LÖVBORG [*who has given a start*]. Ah—what is all this, Mrs. Tesman?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh my God, Hedda! What are you saying? What are you doing?

HEDDA. Don't grow excited! That horrid Judge Brack is sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG. So she was in mortal terror! On my account!

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly and piteously*]. Oh, Hedda—now you have ruined everything!

LÖVBORG [*looks fixedly at her for a moment. His face is distorted*]. So that was my comrade's frank confidence in me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*imploringly*]. Oh, my dearest friend—only let me tell you—

LÖVBORG [*takes one of the glasses of punch, raises it to his lips, and says in a low, husky voice*]. Your health, Thea!

[*He empties the glass, puts it down, and takes the second.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly*]. Oh, Hedda, Hedda—how could you do this?

HEDDA. I do it? I? Are you crazy?

LÖVBORG. Here's to your health too, Mrs. Tesman. Thanks for the truth. Hurrah for the truth!

[*He empties the glass and is about to re-fill it.*]

HEDDA [*lays her hand on his arm*]. Come, come—no more for the present. Remember you are going out to supper.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no!

HEDDA. Hush! They are sitting watching you.

LÖVBORG [*putting down the glass*]. Now, Thea—tell me the truth—

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes.

LÖVBORG. Did your husband know that you had come after me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh, Hedda—do you hear what he is asking?

LÖVBORG. Was it arranged between you and him that you were to come to town and look after me? Perhaps it was the Sheriff himself that urged you to come? Aha, my dear—no doubt he wanted my help in his office! Or was it at the card-table that he missed me?

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly, in agony*]. Oh, Lövborg, Lövborg—!

LÖVBORG [*seizes a glass and is on the point of filling it*]. Here's a glass for the old Sheriff, too!

HEDDA [*preventing him*]. No more just now. Remember you have to read your manuscript to Tesman.

LÖVBORG [*calmly, putting down the glass*]. It was stupid of me, all this, Thea—to take it in this way, I mean. Don't be angry with me, my dear, dear comrade. You shall see—both you and the others—that if I was fallen once—now I have risen again! Thanks to you, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED [*radiant with joy*]. Oh, heaven be praised—!

[BRACK has in the meantime looked at his watch. He and TESMAN rise and come into the drawing-room.]

BRACK [*takes his hat and overcoat*]. Well, Mrs. Tesman, our time has come.

HEDDA. I suppose it has.

LÖVBORG [*rising*]. Mine too, Judge Brack.

MRS. ELVSTED [*softly and imploringly*]. Oh, Lövborg, don't do it!

HEDDA [*pinching her arm*]. They can hear you!

MRS. ELVSTED [*with a suppressed shriek*]. Ow!

LÖVBORG [*to BRACK*]. You were good enough to invite me.

BRACK. Well, are you coming, after all?

LÖVBORG. Yes, many thanks.

BRACK. I'm delighted—

LÖVBORG [*to TESMAN, putting the parcel of MS. in his pocket*]. I should like to show you one or two things before I send it to the printers.

TESMAN. Fancy—that will be delightful. But, Hedda dear, how is Mrs. Elvsted to get home? Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, that can be managed somehow.

LÖVBORG [*looking toward the ladies*]. Mrs. Elvsted? Of course, I'll come again and fetch her. [*Approaching.*] At ten or thereabouts, Mrs. Tesman? Will that do?

HEDDA. Certainly. That will do capitally.

TESMAN. Well, then, that's all right. But you must not expect *me* so early, Hedda.

HEDDA. Oh, you may stop as long—as long as ever you please.

MRS. ELVSTED [*trying to conceal her anxiety*]. Well then, Mr. Lövborg—I shall remain here until you come.

LÖVBORG [*with his hat in his hand*]. Pray do, Mrs. Elvsted.

BRACK. And now off goes the excursion train, gentlemen! I hope we shall have a lively time, as a certain fair lady puts it.

HEDDA. Ah, if only the fair lady could be present unseen—!

BRACK. Why unseen?

HEDDA. In order to hear a little of your liveliness at first hand, Judge Brack.

BRACK [*laughing*]. I should not advise the fair lady to try it.

TESMAN [*also laughing*]. Come, you're a nice one, Hedda! Fancy that!

BRACK. Well, good-bye, good-bye, ladies.

LÖVBORG [*bowing*]. About ten o'clock, then.

[BRACK, LÖVBORG, and TESMAN go out by the hall door.]

At the same time BERTA enters from the inner room with a lighted lamp, which she places on the dining-room table; she goes out by the way she came.]

MRS. ELVSTED [*who has risen and is wandering restlessly about the room*]. Hedda—Hedda—what will come of all this?

HEDDA. At ten o'clock—he will be here. I can see him already—with vine-leaves in his hair—flushed and fearless—

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I hope he may.

HEDDA. And then, you see—then he will have regained control over himself. Then he will be a free man for all his days.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh God! If he would only come as you see him now!

HEDDA. He will come as I see him—so, and not otherwise! [*Rises and approaches THEA.*] You may doubt him as long as you please; I believe in him. And now we will try—

MRS. ELVSTED. You have some hidden motive in this, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, I have. *I want for once in my life to have power to mould a human destiny.*

MRS. ELVSTED. Have you not that power?

HEDDA. I have not—and have never had it.

MRS. ELVSTED. Not your husband's?

HEDDA. Do you think that is worth the trouble? Oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And fate has made you so rich! [*Clasps her passionately in her arms.*] I think I must burn your hair off, after all.

MRS. ELVSTED. Let me go! Let me go! I am afraid of you, Hedda!

BERTA [*in the middle doorway*]. Tea is laid in the dining room, ma'am.

HEDDA. Very well. We are coming.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no, no! I would rather go home alone! At once!

HEDDA. Nonsense? First you shall have a cup of tea, you little stupid. And then—at ten o'clock—Eilert Lövborg will be here—with vine-leaves in his hair.

[*She drags MRS. ELVSTED almost by force towards the middle doorway.*]

ACT III

SCENE.—*The room at the TESMAN'S. The curtains are drawn over the middle doorway, and also over the glass door. The lamp, half turned down, and with a shade over it, is burning on the table. In the stove, the door of which stands open, there has been a fire, which is now nearly burnt out.*]

[*MRS. ELVSTED, wrapped in a large shawl, and with her feet upon a foot-rest, sits close to the stove, sunk back in the arm-chair. HEDDA, fully dressed, lies sleeping upon the sofa, with a sofa-blanket over her.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*after a pause, suddenly sits up in her chair, and listens eagerly. Then she sinks back again wearily, moaning to herself*]. Not yet!—Oh God—oh God—not yet!

[*BERTA slips in by the hall door. She has a letter in her hand.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*turns and whispers eagerly*]. Well—has any one come?

BERTA [*softly*]. Yes, a girl brought this letter.

MRS. ELVSTED [*quickly, holding out her hand*]. A letter! Give it to me!

BERTA. It's for Dr. Tesman, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh.

BERTA. It was Miss Tesman's servant that brought it. I'll lay it here on the table.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, do.

BERTA [*laying down the letter*]. I think I had better put out the lamp. It's smoking.

MRS. ELVSTED. Put it out. It must soon be daylight now.

BERTA [*putting out the lamp*]. It is daylight already, ma'am.

MRS. ELVSTED. Broad day! And no one come back yet—!

BERTA. Lord bless you, ma'am—I guessed how it would be.

MRS. ELVSTED. You guessed.

BERTA. Yes, when I saw that a certain person had come back to town—and that he went off with them. For we've heard enough about that gentleman before now.

MRS. ELVSTED. Don't speak so loud. You will waken Mrs. Tesman.

BERTA [*looks towards the sofa and sighs*]. No, no—let her sleep, poor thing. Shan't I put some wood on the fire?

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks, not for me.

BERTA. Oh, very well. [*She goes softly out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*is awakened by the shutting of the door, and looks up*]. What's that—?

MRS. ELVSTED. It was only the servant—

HEDDA [*looking about her*]. Oh, we're here—! Yes, now I remember. [*Sits erect upon the sofa, stretches herself, and rubs her eyes.*] What o'clock is it, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks at her watch*]. It's past seven.

HEDDA. When did Tesman come home?

MRS. ELVSTED. He has not come.

HEDDA. Not come home yet?

MRS. ELVSTED [*rising*]. No one has come.

HEDDA. Think of our watching and waiting here till four in the morning—

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. And how I watched and waited for him!

HEDDA [*yawns, and says with her hand before her mouth*]: Well, well—we might have spared ourselves the trouble.

MRS. ELVSTED. Did you get a little sleep?

HEDDA. Oh yes; I believe I have slept pretty well. Have you not?

MRS. ELVSTED. Not for a moment. I couldn't, Hedda!—not to save my life.

HEDDA [*rises and goes towards her*]. There, there, there! There's nothing to be so alarmed about. I understand quite well what has happened.

MRS. ELVSTED. Well, what do you think? Won't you tell me?

HEDDA. Why, of course, it has been a very late affair at Judge Brack's—

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, that is clear enough. But all the same—

HEDDA. And then, you see, Tesman hasn't cared to come home and ring us up in the middle of the night. [*Laughing.*] Perhaps he wasn't inclined to show himself either—immediately after a jollification.

MRS. ELVSTED. But in that case—where can he have gone?

HEDDA. Of course, he has gone to his aunts' and slept there. They have his old room ready for him.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, he can't be with them; for a letter has just come for him from Miss Tesman. There it lies.

HEDDA. Indeed? [*Looks at the address.*] Why yes, it's addressed in Aunt Julia's own hand. Then, he has remained at Judge Brack's. And as for Eilert Lövborg—he is sitting, with vine-leaves in his hair, reading his manuscript.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh Hedda, you are just saying things you don't believe a bit.

HEDDA. You really are a little blockhead, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I suppose I am.

HEDDA. And how mortally tired you look.

MRS. ELVSTED. I am mortally tired.

HEDDA. Well then, you must do as I tell you. You must go into my room and lie down for a little while.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh no, no—I shouldn't be able to sleep.

HEDDA. I am sure you would.

MRS. ELVSTED. But your husband is certain to come soon now; and then I want to know at once—

HEDDA. I shall take care to let you know when he comes.

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you promise me, Hedda?

HEDDA. Rely upon me. Just go in and have a sleep in the meantime.

MRS. ELVSTED. Thanks; I'll try to. [*She goes off through the inner room.*]

[HEDDA goes up to the glass door and draws back the

curtains. The broad daylight streams into the room. Then she takes a little hand-glass from the writing-table, looks at herself in it, and arranges her hair. Next she goes to the hall door and presses the bell-button.]

[BERTA presently appears at the hall door.]

BERTA. Did you want anything, ma'am?

HEDDA. Yes; put some more wood in the stove. I am shivering.

BERTA. Bless me—I'll make up the fire at once. [*She rakes the embers together and lays a piece of wood upon them; then stops and listens.*] That was a ring at the front door, ma'am.

HEDDA. Then go to the door. I will look after the fire.

BERTA. It'll soon burn up. [*She goes out by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA kneels on the foot-rest and lays some more pieces of wood in the stove.*]

[*After a short pause, GEORGE TESMAN enters from the hall. He looks tired and rather serious. He steals on tiptoe towards the middle doorway and is about to slip through the curtains.*]

HEDDA [*at the stove, without looking up*]. Good morning.

TESMAN [*turns*]. Hedda! [*Approaching her.*] Good Heavens—are you up so early? Eh?

HEDDA. I am up very early this morning.

TESMAN. And I never doubted you were still sound asleep! Fancy that, Hedda!

HEDDA. Don't speak so loud. Mrs. Elvsted is resting in my room.

TESMAN. Has Mrs. Elvsted been here all night?

HEDDA. Yes, since no one came to fetch her.

TESMAN. Ah, to be sure.

HEDDA [*closes the door of the stove and rises*]. Well, did you enjoy yourself at Judge Brack's?

TESMAN. Have you been anxious about me? Eh?

HEDDA. No, I should never think of being anxious. But I asked if you had enjoyed yourself.

TESMAN. Oh yes,—for once in a way. Especially the be-

ginning of the evening; for then Eilert read me part of his book. We arrived more than an hour too early—fancy that! And Brack had all sorts of arrangements to make—so Eilert read to me.

HEDDA [*seating herself by the table on the right*]. Well? Tell me, then—

TESMAN [*sitting on a footstool near the stove*]. Oh Hedda, you can't conceive what a book that is going to be! I believe it is one of the most remarkable things that have ever been written. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Yes, yes; I don't care about that—

TESMAN. I must make a confession to you, Hedda. When he had finished reading—a horrid feeling came over me.

HEDDA. A horrid feeling?

TESMAN. I felt jealous of Eilert for having had it in him to write such a book. Only think, Hedda!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, I am thinking!

TESMAN. And then how pitiful to think that he—with all his gifts—should be irreclaimable after all.

HEDDA. I suppose you mean that he has more courage than the rest?

TESMAN. No, not at all—I mean that he is incapable of taking his pleasures in moderation.

HEDDA. And what came of it all—in the end?

TESMAN. To tell the truth, I think it might best be described as an orgy, Hedda.

HEDDA. Had he vine-leaves in his hair?

TESMAN. Vine-leaves? No, I saw nothing of the sort. But he made a long, rambling speech in honour of the woman who had inspired him in his work—that was the phrase he used.

HEDDA. Did he name her?

TESMAN. No, he didn't; but I can't help thinking he meant Mrs. Elvsted. You may be sure he did.

HEDDA. Well—where did you part from him?

TESMAN. On the way to town. We broke up—the last of us at any rate—all together; and Brack came with us to get a breath of fresh air. And then, you see, we agreed to take

Eilert home; for he had had far more than was good for him.

HEDDA. I daresay.

TESMAN. But now comes the strange part of it, Hedda; or I should rather say, the melancholy part of it. I declare I am almost ashamed—on Eilert's account—to tell you—

HEDDA. Oh, go on—

TESMAN. Well, as we were getting near town, you see, I happened to drop a little behind the others. Only for a minute or two—fancy that!

HEDDA. Yes, yes, yes, but——?

TESMAN. And then, as I hurried after them—what do you think I found by the wayside? Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, how should I know!

TESMAN. You mustn't speak of it to a soul, Hedda! Do you hear! Promise me, for Eilert's sake. [*Draws a parcel, wrapped in paper, from his coat pocket.*] Fancy, dear—I found this.

HEDDA. Is not that the parcel he had with him yesterday?

TESMAN. Yes, it is the whole of his precious irreplaceable manuscript! And he had gone and lost it, and knew nothing about it. Only fancy, Hedda! So deplorably—

HEDDA. But why did you not give him back the parcel at once?

TESMAN. I didn't dare to—in the state he was then in—

HEDDA. Did you not tell any of the others that you had found it?

TESMAN. Oh, far from it! You can surely understand that, for Eilert's sake, I wouldn't do that.

HEDDA. So no one knows that Eilert Lövborg's manuscript is in your possession?

TESMAN. No. And no one must know it.

HEDDA. Then what did you say to him afterwards?

TESMAN. I didn't talk to him again at all; for when we got in among the streets, he and two or three of the others gave us the slip and disappeared. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Indeed! They must have taken him home then.

TESMAN. Yes, so it would appear. And Brack, too, left us.

HEDDA. And what have you been doing with yourself since?

TESMAN. Well, I and some of the others went home with one of the party, a jolly fellow, and took our morning coffee with him; or perhaps I should rather call it our night coffee—eh? But now, when I have rested a little, and given Eilert, poor fellow, time to have his sleep out, I must take this back to him.

HEDDA [*holds out her hand for the packet*]. No—don't give it to him! Not in such a hurry, I mean. Let me read it first.

TESMAN. No, my dearest Hedda, I mustn't, I really mustn't.

HEDDA. You must not?

TESMAN. No—for you can imagine what a state of despair he will be in when he awakens and misses the manuscript. He has no copy of it, you must know! He told me so.

HEDDA [*looking searchingly at him*]. Can such a thing not be reproduced? Written over again?

TESMAN. No, I don't think that would be possible. For the inspiration, you see—

HEDDA. Yes, yes—I suppose it depends on that. [*Lightly.*] But, by-the-bye—here is a letter for you.

TESMAN. Fancy——!

HEDDA [*handing it to him*]. It came early this morning.

TESMAN. It's from Aunt Julia! What can it be? [*He lays the packet on the other footstool, opens the letter, runs his eye through it, and jumps up.*] Oh, Hedda—she says that poor Aunt Rina is dying!

HEDDA. Well, we were prepared for that.

TESMAN. And that if I want to see her again, I must make haste. I'll run in to them at once.

HEDDA [*suppressing a smile*]. Will you run?

TESMAN. Oh, dearest Hedda—if you could only make up your mind to come with me! Just think!

HEDDA [*rises and says wearily, repelling the idea.*] No, no, don't ask me. I will not look upon sickness and death. I loathe all sorts of ugliness.

TESMAN. Well, well, then—! [*Bustling around.*] My hat— My overcoat—? Oh, in the hall— I do hope I mayn't come too late, Hedda! Eh?

HEDDA. Oh, if you run—

BERTA. Judge Brack is at the door, and wishes to know if he may come in.

TESMAN. At this time! No, I can't possibly see him.

HEDDA. But I can. [*To BERTA.*] Ask Judge Brack to come in. [*BERTA goes out.*]

HEDDA [*quickly whispering*]. The parcel, Tesman! [*She snatches it up from the stool.*]

TESMAN. Yes, give it to me!

HEDDA. No, no, I will keep it till you come back.

[*She goes to the writing-table and places it in the book-case. TESMAN stands in a flurry of haste, and cannot get his gloves on.*]

[*JUDGE BRACK enters from the hall.*]

HEDDA [*nodding to him*]. You are an early bird, I must say.

BRACK. Yes, don't you think so? [*To TESMAN.*] Are you on the move, too?

TESMAN. Yes, I must rush off to my aunt's. Fancy—the invalid one is lying at death's door, poor creature.

BRACK. Dear me, is she indeed? Then on no account let me detain you. At such a critical moment—

TESMAN. Yes, I must really rush— Good-bye! Good-bye! [*He hastens out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*approaching*]. You seem to have made a particularly lively night of it at your rooms, Judge Brack.

BRACK. I assure you I have not had my clothes off, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Not you, either?

BRACK. No, as you may see. But what has Tesman been telling you of the night's adventures?

HEDDA. Oh, some tiresome story. Only that they went and had coffee somewhere or other.

BRACK. I have heard about that coffee-party already. Eilert Lövborg was not with them, I fancy?

HEDDA. No, they had taken him home before that.

BRACK. Tesman, too?

HEDDA. No, but some of the others, he said.

BRACK [*smiling*]. George Tesman is really an ingenuous creature, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Then is there something behind all this?

BRACK. Perhaps there may be.

HEDDA. Well then, sit down, my dear Judge, and tell your story in comfort.

[*She seats herself to the left of the table. BRACK sits near her, at the long side of the table.*]

HEDDA. Now then?

BRACK. I had special reasons for keeping track of my guests—or rather of some of my guests—last night.

HEDDA. Of Eilert Lövborg among the rest, perhaps?

BRACK. Frankly, yes.

HEDDA. Now you make me really curious—

BRACK. Do you know where he and one or two of the others finished the night, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. If it is not quite unmentionable, tell me.

BRACK. Oh no, it's not at all unmentionable. Well, they put in an appearance at a particularly animated soirée.

HEDDA. Of the lively kind?

BRACK. Of the very liveliest—

HEDDA. Tell me more of this, Judge Brack—

BRACK. Lövborg, as well as the others, had been invited in advance. I knew all about it. But he had declined the invitation; for now, as you know, he has become a new man.

HEDDA. Up at the Elvsteds', yes. But he went after all, then?

BRACK. Well, you see, Madam Hedda—unhappily the spirit moved him at my rooms last evening—

HEDDA. Yes, I hear he found inspiration.

BRACK. Pretty violent inspiration. Well, I fancy that altered his purpose; for we men folk are unfortunately not always so firm in our principles as we ought to be.

HEDDA. Oh, I am sure you are an exception, Judge Brack. But as to Lövborg—?

BRACK. To make a long story short—he landed at last in Mademoiselle Diana's rooms.

HEDDA. Mademoiselle Diana's?

BRACK. It was Mademoiselle Diana that was giving the soirée, to a select circle of her admirers and her lady friends.

HEDDA. Is she a red-haired woman?

BRACK. Precisely.

HEDDA. A sort of—singer?

BRACK. Oh yes—in her leisure moments. And moreover, a mighty huntress—of men—Madam Hedda. You have no doubt heard of her. Eilert Lövborg was one of her most enthusiastic protectors—in the days of his glory.

HEDDA. And how did all this end?

BRACK. Far from amicably, it appears. After a most tender meeting, they seem to have come to blows—

HEDDA. Lövborg and she?

BRACK. Yes. He accused her or her friends of having robbed him. He declared that his pocket-book had disappeared—and other things as well. In short, he seems to have made a furious disturbance.

HEDDA. And what came of it all?

BRACK. It came to a general scrimmage, in which the ladies as well as the gentlemen took part. Fortunately, the police at last appeared on the scene.

HEDDA. The police too?

BRACK. Yes. I fancy it will prove a costly frolic for Eilert Lövborg, crazy being that he is.

HEDDA. How so?

BRACK. He seems to have made a violent resistance—to have hit one of the constables on the head and torn the coat off his back. So they had to march him off to the police-station with the rest.

HEDDA. How have you learnt all this?

BRACK. From the police themselves.

HEDDA [*gazing straight before her*]. So that is what happened. Then he had no vine-leaves in his hair.

BRACK. Vine-leaves, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA [*changing her tone*]. But tell me now, Judge—

what is your real reason for tracking out Eilert Lövborg's movements so carefully?

BRACK. In the first place, it could not be entirely indifferent to me if it should appear in the police-court that he came straight from my house.

HEDDA. Will the matter come into court then?

BRACK. Of course. However, I should scarcely have troubled so much about that. But I thought that, as a friend of the family, it was my duty to supply you and Tesman with a full account of his nocturnal exploits.

HEDDA. Why so, Judge Brack?

BRACK. Why, because I have a shrewd suspicion that he intends to use you as a sort of blind.

HEDDA. Oh, how can you think such a thing!

BRACK. Good heavens, Madam Hedda—we have eyes in our head. Mark my words! This Mrs. Elvsted will be in no hurry to leave town again.

HEDDA. Well, even if there should be anything between them, I suppose there are plenty of other places where they could meet.

BRACK. Not a single home. Henceforth, as before, every respectable house will be closed against Eilert Lövborg.

HEDDA. And so ought mine to be, you mean?

BRACK. Yes. I confess it would be more than painful to me if this personage were to be made free of your house. How superfluous, how intrusive, he would be, if he were to force his way into—

HEDDA. —into the triangle?

BRACK. Precisely. It would simply mean that I should find myself homeless.

HEDDA [*looks at him with a smile*]. So, you want to be the cock of the walk—that is your aim.

BRACK [*nods slowly and lowers his voice*]. Yes, that is my aim. And for that I will fight—with every weapon I can command.

HEDDA [*her smile vanishing*]. I see you are a dangerous person—when it comes to the point.

BRACK. Do you think so?

HEDDA. I am beginning to think so. And I am exceedingly glad to think—that you have no sort of hold over me.

BRACK [*laughing equivocally*]. Well, well, Madam Hedda—perhaps you are right there. If I had, who knows what I might be capable of?

HEDDA. Come, come now, Judge Brack. That sounds almost like a threat.

BRACK [*rising*]. Oh, not at all! The triangle, you know, ought, if possible, to be spontaneously constructed.

HEDDA. There I agree with you.

BRACK. Well, now I have said all I had to say; and I had better be getting back to town. Good-bye, Madam Hedda. [*He goes towards the glass door.*]

HEDDA [*rising*]. Are you going through the garden?

BRACK. Yes, it's a short cut for me.

HEDDA. And then it is a back way, too.

BRACK. Quite so. I have no objection to back ways. They may be piquant enough at times.

HEDDA. When there is ball practice going on, you mean?

BRACK [*in the doorway, laughing at her*]. Oh, people don't shoot their tame poultry, I fancy.

HEDDA [*also laughing*]. No, when there is only one cock of the walk!

[*They exchange laughing nods of farewell.*]

[*He goes. She closes the door behind him.*]

[HEDDA, who has become quite serious, stands for a moment looking out. Presently she goes and peeps through the curtain over the middle doorway. Then she goes to the writing-table, takes LÖVBORG's packet out of the bookcase, and is on the point of looking through its contents. BERTA is heard speaking loudly in the hall. HEDDA turns and listens. Then she hastily locks up the packet in the drawer, and lays the key on the inkstand.]

[EILERT LÖVBORG, with his great coat on and his hat in his hand, tears open the hall door. He looks somewhat confused and irritated.]

LÖVBORG [*looking towards the hall*]. And I tell you I must and will come in! There!

[*He closes the door, turns and sees HEDDA, at once regains his self-control, and bows.*]

HEDDA [*at the writing-table*]. Well, Mr. Lövborg, this is rather a late hour to call for Thea.

LÖVBORG. You mean rather an early hour to call on you. Pray pardon me.

HEDDA. How do you know that she is still here?

LÖVBORG. They told me at her lodgings that she had been out all night.

HEDDA [*going to the oval table*]. Did you notice anything about the people of the house when they said that?

LÖVBORG [*looks inquiringly at her*]. Notice anything about them?

HEDDA. I mean, did they seem to think it odd?

LÖVBORG [*suddenly understanding*]. Oh yes, of course! I am dragging her down with me! However, I didn't notice anything.—I suppose Tesman is not up yet?

HEDDA. No—I think not—

LÖVBORG. When did he come home?

HEDDA. Very late.

LÖVBORG. Did he tell you anything?

HEDDA. Yes, I gathered that you had had an exceedingly jolly evening at Judge Brack's.

LÖVBORG. Nothing more?

HEDDA. I don't think so. However, I was so dreadfully sleepy—

[*MRS. ELVSTED enters through the curtains of the middle doorway.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*going towards him*]. Ah, Lövborg! At last——!

LÖVBORG. Yes, at last. And too late!

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks anxiously at him*]. What is too late?

LÖVBORG. Everything is too late now. It is all over with me.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, no, no—don't say that?

LÖVBORG. You will say the same when you hear—

MRS. ELVSTED. I won't hear anything!

HEDDA. Perhaps you would prefer to talk to her alone! If so, I will leave you.

LÖVBORG. No, stay—you too. I beg you to stay.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, but I won't hear anything, I tell you.

LÖVBORG. It is not last night's adventures that I want to talk about.

MRS. ELVSTED. What is it then—?

LÖVBORG. I want to say that now our ways must part.

MRS. ELVSTED. Part!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. I knew it!

LÖVBORG. You can be of no more service to me, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. How can you stand there and say that! No more service to you! Am I not to help you now, as before? Are we not to go on working together?

LÖVBORG. Henceforward I shall do no work.

MRS. ELVSTED [*despairingly*]. Then what am I to do with my life?

LÖVBORG. You must try to live your life as if you had never known me.

MRS. ELVSTED. But you know I cannot do that!

LÖVBORG. Try if you cannot, Thea. You must go home again—

MRS. ELVSTED [*in vehement protest*]. Never in this world! Where you are, there will I be also! I will not let myself be driven away like this! I will remain here! I will be with you when the book appears.

HEDDA [*half aloud, in suspense*]. Ah yes—the book!

LÖVBORG [*looks at her*]. My book and Thea's; for that is what it is.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I feel that it is. And that is why I have a right to be with you when it appears! I will see with my own eyes how respect and honour pour in upon you afresh. And the happiness—the happiness—oh, I must share it with you!

LÖVBORG. Thea—our book will never appear.

HEDDA. Ah!

MRS. ELVSTED. Never appear!

LÖVBORG. Can never appear.

MRS. ELVSTED [*in agonised foreboding*]. Lövborg—what have you done with the manuscript?

HEDDA [*looks anxiously at him*]. Yes, the manuscript—?

MRS. ELVSTED. Where is it?

LÖVBORG. Oh Thea—don't ask me about it!

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I will know. I demand to be told at once.

LÖVBORG. The manuscript— Well then—I have torn the manuscript into a thousand pieces.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shrieks*]. Oh no, no—!

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. But that's not—

LÖVBORG [*looks at her*]. Not true, you think?

HEDDA [*collecting herself*]. Oh well, of course—since you say so. But it sounded so improbable—

LÖVBORG. It is true, all the same.

MRS. ELVSTED [*wringing her hands*]. Oh God—oh God, Hedda—torn his own work to pieces!

LÖVBORG. I have torn my own life to pieces. So why should I not tear my life-work too—?

MRS. ELVSTED. And you did this last night?

LÖVBORG. Yes, I tell you! Tore it into a thousand pieces and scattered them on the fiord—far out. There there is cool sea-water at any rate—let them drift upon it—drift with the current and the wind. And then presently they will sink—deeper and deeper—as I shall, Thea.

MRS. ELVSTED. Do you know, Lövborg, that what you have done with the book—I shall think of it to my dying day as though you had killed a little child.

LÖVBORG. You are right. It is a sort of child-murder.

MRS. ELVSTED. How could you, then—! Did not the child belong to me too?

HEDDA [*almost inaudibly*]. Ah, the child—

MRS. ELVSTED [*breathing heavily*]. It is all over then. Well, well, now I will go, Hedda.

HEDDA. But you are not going away from town?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I don't know what I shall do. I see nothing but darkness before me.

[*She goes out by the hall door.*]

HEDDA [*stands waiting for a moment*]. So you are not going to see her home, Mr. Lövborg?

LÖVBORG. I? Through the streets? Would you have people see her walking with me?

HEDDA. Of course I don't know what else may have happened last night. But is it so utterly irretrievable?

LÖVBORG. It will not end with last night—I know that perfectly well. And the thing is that now I have no taste for that sort of life either. I won't begin it anew. She has broken my courage and my power of braving life out.

HEDDA [*looking straight before her*]. So that pretty little fool has had her fingers in a man's destiny. [*Looks at him.*] But all the same, how could you treat her so heartlessly?

LÖVBORG. Oh, don't say that it was heartless!

HEDDA. To go and destroy what has filled her whole soul for months and years! You do not call that heartless!

LÖVBORG. To you I can tell the truth, Hedda.

HEDDA. The truth?

LÖVBORG. First promise me—give me your word—that what I now confide to you Thea shall never know.

HEDDA. I give you my word.

LÖVBORG. Good. Then let me tell you that what I said just now was untrue.

HEDDA. About the manuscript?

LÖVBORG. Yes. I have not torn it to pieces—nor thrown it into the fiord.

HEDDA. No, n— But—where is it then?

LÖVBORG. I have destroyed it none the less—utterly destroyed it, Hedda!

HEDDA. I don't understand.

LÖVBORG. Thea said that what I had done seemed to her like a child-murder.

HEDDA. Yes, so she said.

LÖVBORG. But to kill his child—that is not the worst thing a father can do to it.

HEDDA. Not the worst?

LÖVBORG. No. I wanted to spare Thea from hearing the worst.

HEDDA. Then what is the worst?

LÖVBORG. Suppose now, Hedda, that a man—in the small hours of the morning—came home to his child's mother after a night of riot and debauchery, and said: "Listen—I have been here and there—in this place and in that. And I have taken our child with me—to this place and to that. And I have lost the child—utterly lost it. The devil knows into what hands it may have fallen—who may have had his clutches on it."

HEDDA. Well—but when all is said and done, you know—that was only a book—

LÖVBORG. Thea's pure soul was in that book.

HEDDA. Yes, so I understand.

LÖVBORG. And you can understand, too, that for her and me together no future is possible.

HEDDA. What path do you mean to take then?

LÖVBORG. None. I will only try to make an end of it all—the sooner the better.

HEDDA [*a step nearer to him*]. Eilert Lövborg—listen to me. Will you not try to—to do it beautifully?

LÖVBORG. Beautifully? [*Smiling.*] With vine-leaves in my hair, as you used to dream in the old days—?

HEDDA. No, no. I have lost my faith in the vine-leaves. But beautifully, nevertheless! For once in a way!—Good-bye! You must go now—and do not come here any more.

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Mrs. Tesman. And give George Tesman my love. [*He is on the point of going.*]

HEDDA. No, wait! I must give you a memento to take with you.

[*She goes to the writing-table and opens the drawer and the pistol-case; then returns to LÖVBORG with one of the pistols.*]

LÖVBORG [*looks at her*]. This? Is this the memento?

HEDDA [*nodding slowly*]. Do you recognise it? It was aimed at you once.

LÖVBORG. You should have used it then.

HEDDA. Take it—and do you use it now.

LÖVBORG [*puts the pistol in his breast pocket*]. Thanks!

HEDDA. And beautifully, Eilert Lövborg. Promise me that!

LÖVBORG. Good-bye, Hedda Gabler. [*He goes out by the hall door.*]

[*HEDDA listens for a moment at the door. Then she goes up to the writing-table, takes out the packet of manuscript, peeps under the cover, draws a few of the sheets half out, and looks at them. Next she goes over and seats herself in the arm-chair beside the stove, with the packet in her lap. Presently she opens the stove door, and then the packet.*]

HEDDA [*throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself*]. Now I am burning your child, Thea!—Burning its curly-locks! [*Throwing one or two more quires into the stove.*] Your child and Eilert Lövborg's. [*Throws the rest in.*] I am burning—I am burning your child.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*The same rooms at the TESMANS'. It is evening. The drawing-room is in darkness. The back room is lighted by the hanging lamp over the table. The curtains over the glass door are drawn close.*

HEDDA, dressed in black, walks to and fro in the dark room. Then she goes into the back room and disappears for a moment to the left. She is heard to strike a few chords on the piano. Presently she comes in sight again, and returns to the drawing-room.

BERTA enters from the right, through the inner room, with a lighted lamp, which she places on the table in front of the corner settee in the drawing-room. Her eyes are red with weeping, and she has black ribbons in her cap. She goes quietly and circumspectly out to the right.

HEDDA goes up to the glass door, lifts the curtain a little aside, and looks out into the darkness.

Shortly afterwards, MISS TESMAN, in mourning, with a bonnet and veil on, comes in from the hall. HEDDA goes towards her and holds out her hand.

MISS TESMAN. Yes, Hedda, here I am, in mourning and forlorn; for now my poor sister has at last found peace.

HEDDA. I have heard the news already, as you see. Tesman sent me a card.

MISS TESMAN. He promised me he would. Nevertheless I thought that to Hedda—here in the house of life—I ought myself to bring the tidings of death.

HEDDA. That was very kind of you.

MISS TESMAN. Ah, Rina ought not to have left us just now. This is not the time for Hedda's house to be a house of mourning.

HEDDA [*changing the subject*]. She died quite peacefully, did she not, Miss Tesman?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, her end was so calm, so beautiful. And then she had the unspeakable happiness of seeing George once more—and bidding him good-bye.—Has he come home yet?

HEDDA. No. He wrote that he might be detained. But won't you sit down?

MISS TESMAN. No thank you, my dear, dear Hedda. I should like to, but I have so much to do. I must prepare my dear one for her rest as well as I can. She shall go to her grave looking her best.

HEDDA. Can I not help you in any way?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, you must not think of it! Hedda Tesman must have no hand in such mournful work. Nor let her thoughts dwell on it either—not at this time.

HEDDA. One is not always mistress of one's thoughts—

MISS TESMAN [*continuing*]. Ah yes, it is the way of the world. At home we shall be sewing a shroud; and here there will soon be sewing too, I suppose—but of another sort, thank God!

[GEORGE TESMAN *enters by the hall door.*]

HEDDA. Ah, you have come at last!

TESMAN. You here, Aunt Julia? With Hedda? Fancy that!

MISS TESMAN. I was just going, my dear boy. Well, have you done all you promised?

TESMAN. No; I'm really afraid I have forgotten half of it. I must come to you again to-morrow. To-day my brain is all in a whirl. I can't keep my thoughts together.

MISS TESMAN. Why, my dear George, you mustn't take it in this way.

TESMAN. Mustn't——? How do you mean?

MISS TESMAN. Even in your sorrow you must rejoice, as I do—rejoice that she is at rest.

TESMAN. Oh yes, yes—you are thinking of Aunt Rina.

HEDDA. You will feel lonely now, Miss Tesman.

MISS TESMAN. Just at first, yes. But that will not last very long, I hope. I daresay I shall soon find an occupant for poor Rina's little room.

TESMAN. Indeed? Who do you think will take it? Eh?

MISS TESMAN. Oh, there's always some poor invalid or other in want of nursing, unfortunately.

HEDDA. Would you really take such a burden upon you again?

MISS TESMAN. A burden! Heaven forgive you, child—it has been no burden to me.

HEDDA. But suppose you had a total stranger on your hands——

MISS TESMAN. Oh, one soon makes friends with sick folk; and it's such an absolute necessity for me to have some one to live for. Well, heaven be praised, there may soon be something in this house, too, to keep an old aunt busy.

HEDDA. Oh, don't trouble about anything here.

TESMAN. Yes, just fancy what a nice time we three might have together, if——?

HEDDA. If——?

TESMAN [*uneasily*]. Oh, nothing. It will all come right. Let us hope so—eh?

MISS TESMAN. Well, well, I daresay you two want to talk to each other. [*Smiling.*] And perhaps Hedda may have something to tell you too, George. Good-bye! I must go home to Rina. [*Turning at the door.*] How strange it is to

think that now Rina is with me and with my poor brother as well!

TESMAN. Yes, fancy that, Aunt Julia! Eh?

[MISS TESMAN goes out by the hall door.]

HEDDA [*follows TESMAN coldly and searchingly with her eyes*]. I almost believe your Aunt Rina's death affects you more than it does your Aunt Julia.

TESMAN. Oh, it's not that alone. It's Eilert I am so terribly uneasy about.

HEDDA [*quickly*]. Is there anything new about him?

TESMAN. I looked in at his rooms this afternoon, intending to tell him that the manuscript was in safe keeping.

HEDDA. Well, did you not find him?

TESMAN. No. He wasn't at home. But afterwards I met Mrs. Elvsted, and she told me that he had been here early this morning.

HEDDA. Yes, directly after you had gone.

TESMAN. And he said that he had torn his manuscript to pieces—eh?

HEDDA. Yes, so he declared.

TESMAN. Why, good heavens, he must have been completely out of his mind! And I suppose you thought it best not to give it back to him, Hedda?

HEDDA. No, he did not get it.

TESMAN. But of course you told him that we had it?

HEDDA. No. [*Quickly.*] Did you tell Mrs. Elvsted?

TESMAN. No; I thought I had better not. But you ought to have told him. Fancy, if, in desperation, he should go and do himself some injury! Let me have the manuscript, Hedda! I will take it to him at once. Where is it?

HEDDA [*cold and immovable, leaning on the arm-chair*]. I have not got it.

TESMAN. Have not got it? What in the world do you mean?

HEDDA. I have burnt it—every line of it.

TESMAN [*with a violent movement of terror*]. Burnt! Burnt Eilert's manuscript!

HEDDA. Don't scream so. The servant might hear you.

TESMAN. Burnt! Why, good God——! No, no, no! It's impossible!

HEDDA. It is so, nevertheless.

TESMAN. Do you know what you have done, Hedda? It's unlawful appropriation of lost property. Fancy that! Just ask Judge Brack, and he'll tell you what it is.

HEDDA. I advise you not to speak of it—either to Judge Brack, or to any one else.

TESMAN. But how could you do anything so unheard-of? What put it into your head? What possessed you? Answer me that—eh?

HEDDA [*suppressing an almost imperceptible smile*]. I did it for your sake, George.

TESMAN. For my sake!

HEDDA. This morning, when you told me about what he had read to you——

TESMAN. Yes, yes—what then?

HEDDA. You acknowledged that you envied him his work.

TESMAN. Oh, of course I didn't mean that literally.

HEDDA. No matter—I could not bear the idea that anyone should throw you into the shade.

TESMAN [*in an outburst of mingled doubt and joy*]. Hedda! Oh, is this true? But—but—I never knew you to show your love like that before. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, I may as well tell you that—just at this time——[*Impatiently, breaking off*.] No, no; you can ask Aunt Julia. She will tell you, fast enough.

TESMAN. Oh, I almost think I understand you, Hedda! [*Clasps his hands together*.] Great heavens! do you really mean it! Eh?

HEDDA. Don't shout so. The servant might hear.

TESMAN [*laughing in irrepressible glee*]. The servant! Why, how absurd you are, Hedda. It's only my old Berta! Why, I'll tell Berta myself.

HEDDA [*clenching her hands together in desperation*]. Oh, it is killing me,—it is killing me, all this!

TESMAN. What is, Hedda? Eh?

HEDDA [*coldly, controlling herself*]. All this—absurdity—George.

TESMAN. Absurdity! Do you see anything absurd in my being overjoyed at the news! But after all—perhaps I had better not say anything to Berta.

HEDDA. Oh—why not that too?

TESMAN. No, no, not yet! But I must certainly tell Aunt Julia. And then that you have begun to call me George too! Fancy that! Oh, Aunt Julia will be so happy—so happy!

HEDDA. When she hears that I have burnt Eilert Lövborg's manuscript—for your sake?

TESMAN. No, by-the-bye—that affair of the manuscript—of course nobody must know about that. But that you love me so much, Hedda—Aunt Julia must really share my joy in that! I wonder, now, whether this sort of thing is usual in young wives? Eh?

HEDDA. I think you had better ask Aunt Julia that question too.

TESMAN. I will indeed, some time or other. [*Looks uneasy and downcast again.*] And yet the manuscript—the manuscript! Good God! it is terrible to think what will become of poor Eilert now.

[MRS. ELVSTED, *dressed as in the first Act, with hat and cloak, enters by the hall door.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*greeted them hurriedly, and says in evident agitation*]. Oh, dear Hedda, forgive my coming again.

HEDDA. What is the matter with you, Thea?

TESMAN. Something about Eilert Lövborg again—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes! I am dreadfully afraid some misfortune has happened to him.

HEDDA [*seizes her arm*]. Ah—do you think so?

TESMAN. Why, good Lord—what makes you think that, Mrs. Elvsted?

MRS. ELVSTED. I heard them talking of him at my boarding-house—just as I came in. Oh, the most incredible rumours are afloat about him to-day.

TESMAN. Yes, fancy, so I heard too! And I can bear witness that he went straight home to bed last night. Fancy that!

HEDDA. Well, what did they say at the boarding-house?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I couldn't make out anything clearly. Either they knew nothing definite, or else—— They stopped talking when they saw me; and I did not dare to ask.

TESMAN [*moving about uneasily*]. We must hope—we must hope that you misunderstood them, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, no; I am sure it was of him they were talking. And I heard something about the hospital or——

TESMAN. The hospital?

HEDDA. No—surely that cannot be!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I was in such mortal terror! I went to his lodgings and asked for him there.

HEDDA. You could make up your mind to that, Thea?

MRS. ELVSTED. What else could I do? I really could bear the suspense no longer.

TESMAN. But you didn't find him either—eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. No. And the people knew nothing about him. He hadn't been home since yesterday afternoon, they said.

TESMAN. Yesterday! Fancy, how could they say that?

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, I am sure something terrible must have happened to him.

TESMAN. Hedda dear—how would it be if I were to go and make inquiries——?

HEDDA. No, no—don't you mix yourself up in this affair.

[JUDGE BRACK, *with his hat in his hand, enters by the hall door, which BERTA opens, and closes behind him. He looks grave and bows in silence.*]

TESMAN. Oh, is that you, my dear Judge? Eh?

BRACK. Yes. It was imperative I should see you this evening.

TESMAN. I can see you have heard the news about Aunt Rina.

BRACK. Yes, that among other things.

TESMAN. Isn't it sad—eh?

BRACK. Well, my dear Tesman, that depends on how you look at it.

TESMAN [*looks doubtfully at him*]. Has anything else happened?

BRACK. Yes.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Anything sad, Judge Brack?

BRACK. That, too, depends on how you look at it, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*unable to restrain her anxiety*]. Oh! it is something about Eilert Lövborg!

BRACK [*with a glance at her*]. What makes you think that, Madam? Perhaps you have already heard something——?

MRS. ELVSTED [*in confusion*]. No, nothing at all, but——

TESMAN. Oh, for heaven's sake, tell us!

BRACK [*shrugging his shoulders*]. Well, I regret to say Eilert Lövborg has been taken to the hospital. He is living at the point of death.

MRS. ELVSTED [*shrieks*]. Oh God! Oh God——!

TESMAN. To the hospital! And at the point of death.

HEDDA [*involuntarily*]. So soon then——

MRS. ELVSTED [*wailing*]. And we parted in anger, Hedda!

HEDDA [*whispers*]. Thea—Thea—be careful!

MRS. ELVSTED [*not heeding her*]. I must go to him! I must see him alive!

BRACK. It is useless, Madam. No one will be admitted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, at least tell me what has happened to him? What is it?

TESMAN. You don't mean to say that he has himself—— Eh?

HEDDA. Yes, I am sure he has.

TESMAN. Hedda, how can you——?

BRACK [*keeping his eyes fixed upon her*]. Unfortunately you have guessed quite correctly, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how horrible!

TESMAN. Himself, then! Fancy that!

HEDDA. Shot himself!

BRACK. Rightly guessed again, Mrs. Tesman.

MRS. ELVSTED [*with an effort at self-control*]. When did it happen, Mr. Brack?

BRACK. This afternoon—between three and four.

TESMAN. But, good Lord, where did he do it? Eh?

BRACK [*with some hesitation*]. Where? Well—I suppose at his lodgings.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, that cannot be; for I was there between six and seven.

BRACK. Well, then, somewhere else. I don't know exactly. I only know that he was found——. He had shot himself—in the breast.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, how terrible! That he should die like that!

HEDDA [*to BRACK*]. Was it in the breast?

BRACK. Yes—as I told you.

HEDDA. Not in the temple?

BRACK. In the breast, Mrs. Tesman.

HEDDA. Well, well—the breast is a good place, too.

BRACK. How do you mean, Mrs. Tesman?

HEDDA [*evasively*]. Oh, nothing—nothing.

TESMAN. And the wound is dangerous, you say—eh?

BRACK. Absolutely mortal. The end has probably come by this time.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, I feel it! The end! The end! Oh, Hedda——!

TESMAN. But tell me, how have you learnt all this?

BRACK [*curtly*]. Through one of the police. A man I had some business with.

HEDDA [*in a clear voice*]. At last a deed worth doing!

TESMAN [*terrified*]. Good Heavens, Hedda! what are you saying?

HEDDA. I say there is beauty in this.

BRACK. H'm, Mrs. Tesman——

TESMAN. Beauty! Fancy that!

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, Hedda, how can you talk of beauty in such an act!

HEDDA. Eilert Lövborg has himself made up his account with life. He has had the courage to do—the one right thing.

MRS. ELVSTED. No, you must never think that was how it happened! It must have been in delirium that he did it.

TESMAN. In despair!

HEDDA. That he did not. I am certain of that.

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes! In delirium! Just as when he tore up our manuscript.

BRACK [*starting*]. The manuscript? Has he torn that up?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, last night.

TESMAN [*whispers softly*]. Oh, Hedda, we shall never get over this.

BRACK. H'm, very extraordinary.

TESMAN [*moving about the room*]. To think of Eilert going out of the world in this way! And not leaving behind him the book that would have immortalised his name——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it could be put together again!

TESMAN. Yes, if it only could! I don't know what I would not give——

MRS. ELVSTED. Perhaps it can, Mr. Tesman.

TESMAN. What do you mean?

MRS. ELVSTED [*searches in the pocket of her dress*]. Look here. I have kept all the loose notes he used to dictate from.

HEDDA [*a step forward*]. Ah——!

TESMAN. You have kept them, Mrs. Elvsted! Eh?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, I have them here. I put them in my pocket when I left home. Here they still are——

TESMAN. Oh, do let me see them!

MRS. ELVSTED [*hands him a bundle of papers*]. But they are in such disorder—all mixed up.

TESMAN. Fancy, if we could make something out of them, after all! Perhaps if we two put our heads together——

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, yes, at least let us try——

TESMAN. We will manage it! We must! I will dedicate my life to this task.

HEDDA. You, George? Your life?

TESMAN. Yes, or rather all the time I can spare. My own collections must wait in the meantime. Hedda—you understand, eh? I owe this to Eilert's memory.

HEDDA. Perhaps.

TESMAN. And so, my dear Mrs. Elvsted, we will give our whole minds to it. There is no use in brooding over what can't be undone—eh? We must try to control our grief as much as possible, and——

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, yes, Mr. Tesman, I will do the best I can.

TESMAN. Well then, come here. I can't rest until we have looked through the notes. Where shall we sit? Here? No, in there, in the back room. Excuse me, my dear Judge. Come with me, Mrs. Elvsted.

MRS. ELVSTED. Oh, if only it were possible!

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED go into the back room. She takes off her hat and cloak. They both sit at the table under the hanging lamp, and are soon deep in an eager examination of the papers. HEDDA crosses to the stove and sits in the arm-chair. Presently BRACK goes up to her.]

HEDDA [*in a low voice*]. Oh, what sense of freedom it gives one, this act of Eilert Lövborg's.

BRACK. Freedom, Madam Hedda? Well, of course, it is a release for him——

HEDDA. I mean for me. It gives me a sense of freedom to know that a deed of deliberate courage is still possible in this world—a deed of spontaneous beauty.

BRACK [*smiling*]. H'm—my dear Madam Hedda——

HEDDA. Oh, I know what you are going to say. For you are a kind of specialist too, like—you know!

BRACK [*looking hard at her*]. Eilert Lövborg was more to you than perhaps you are willing to admit to yourself. Am I wrong?

HEDDA. I don't answer such questions. I only know Eilert Lövborg has had the courage to live his life after his own fashion. And then—the last great act, with its beauty! Ah! that he should have the will and the strength to turn away from the banquet of life—so early.

BRACK. I am sorry, Madam Hedda—but I fear I must dispel an amiable illusion.

HEDDA. Illusion.

BRACK. Which could not have lasted long in any case.

HEDDA. What do you mean?

BRACK. Eilert Lövborg did not shoot himself voluntarily.

HEDDA. Not voluntarily?

BRACK. No. The thing did not happen exactly as I told it.

HEDDA [*in suspense*]. Have you concealed something?
What is it?

BRACK. For poor Mrs. Elvsted's sake I idealized the facts a little.

HEDDA. What are the facts?

BRACK. First, that he is already dead.

HEDDA. At the hospital?

BRACK. Yes—without regaining consciousness.

HEDDA. What more have you concealed?

BRACK. This—the event did not happen at his lodgings.

HEDDA. Oh, that can make no difference.

BRACK. Perhaps it may. For I must tell you—Eilert Lövborg was found shot in—in Mademoiselle Diana's boudoir.

HEDDA [*makes a motion as if to rise, but sinks back again*]. That is impossible, Judge Brack! He cannot have been there again to-day.

BRACK. He was there this afternoon. He went there, he said, to demand the return of something which they had taken from him. Talked wildly about a lost child—

HEDDA. Ah—so that was why——

BRACK. I thought probably he meant his manuscript; but now I hear he destroyed that himself. So I suppose it must have been his pocketbook.

HEDDA. Yes, no doubt. And there—there he was found?

BRACK. Yes, there. With a pistol in his breast-pocket, discharged. The ball had lodged in a vital part.

HEDDA. In the breast—yes.

BRACK. No—in the bowels.

HEDDA [*looks up at him with an expression of loathing*]. That too! Oh, what curse is it that makes everything I touch turn ludicrous and mean?

BRACK. There is one point more, Madam Hedda—another disagreeable feature in the affair.

HEDDA. And what is that?

BRACK. The pistol he carried——

HEDDA [*breathless*]. Well? What of it?

BRACK. He must have stolen it.

HEDDA [*leaps up*]. Stolen it! That is not true! He did not steal it!

BRACK. No other explanation is possible. He must have stolen it——Hush!

[TESMAN and MRS. ELVSTED have risen from the table in the back room, and come into the drawing room.]

TESMAN [*with the papers in both his hands*]. Hedda dear, it is almost impossible to see under that lamp. Think of that!

HEDDA. Yes, I am thinking.

TESMAN. Would you mind our sitting at your writing-table—eh?

HEDDA. If you like. [*Quickly.*] No, wait! Let me clear it first!

TESMAN. Oh, you needn't trouble, Hedda. There is plenty of room.

HEDDA. No, no; let me clear it, I say! I will take these things in and put them on the piano. There!

[*She has drawn out an object, covered with sheet music, from under the book-case, places several other pieces of music upon it, and carries the whole into the inner room, to the left. TESMAN lays the scraps of paper on the writing-table, and moves the lamp there from the corner table. HEDDA returns.*]

HEDDA [*behind MRS. ELVSTED's chair, gently ruffling her hair*]. Well, my sweet Thea—how goes it with Eilert Lövborg's monument?

MRS. ELVSTED [*looks dispiritedly up at her*]. Oh, it will be terribly hard to put in order.

TESMAN. We must manage it. I am determined. And arranging other people's papers is just the work for me.

[HEDDA goes over to the stove, and seats herself on one of the footstools. BRACK stands over her, leaning on the armchair.]

HEDDA [*whispers*]. What did you say about the pistol?

BRACK [*softly*]. That he must have stolen it.

HEDDA. Why stolen it?

BRACK. Because every other explanation ought to be impossible, Madam Hedda.

HEDDA. Indeed?

BRACK [*glances at her*]. Of course, Eilert Lövborg was here this morning. Was he not?

HEDDA. Yes.

BRACK. Were you alone with him?

HEDDA. Part of the time.

BRACK. Did you not leave the room while he was here?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. Try to recollect. Were you not out of the room a moment?

HEDDA. Yes, perhaps just a moment—out in the hall.

BRACK. And where was your pistol-case during that time?

HEDDA. I had it locked up in——

BRACK. Well, Madam Hedda?

HEDDA. The case stood there on the writing-table.

BRACK. Have you looked since, to see whether both the pistols are there?

HEDDA. No.

BRACK. You need not. I saw the pistol found in Lövborg's pocket, and I knew it at once as the one I had seen yesterday—and before, too.

HEDDA. Have you it with you?

BRACK. No; the police have it.

HEDDA. What will the police do with it?

BRACK. Search till they find the owner.

HEDDA. Do you think they will succeed?

BRACK [*bends over her and whispers*]. No Hedda Gabler—not so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*looks frightened at him*]. And if you say nothing—what then?

BRACK [*shrugs his shoulders*]. There is always the possibility that the pistol was stolen.

HEDDA [*firmly*]. Death rather than that.

BRACK [*smiling*]. People say such things—but they don't do them.

HEDDA [*without replying*]. And supposing the pistol was stolen, and the owner is discovered? What then?

BRACK. Well, Hedda—then comes the scandal.

HEDDA. The scandal!

BRACK. Yes, the scandal—of which you are mortally afraid. You will, of course, be brought before the court—both you and Mademoiselle Diana. She will have to explain how the thing happened—whether it was an accidental shot or murder. Did the pistol go off as he was trying to take it out of his pocket, to threaten her with? Or did she tear the pistol out of his hand, shoot him, and push it back into his pocket? That would be quite like her; for she is an able-bodied young person, this same Mademoiselle Diana.

HEDDA. But *I* have nothing to do with all this repulsive business.

BRACK. No. But you will have to answer the question: Why did you give Eilert Lövborg the pistol? And what conclusions will people draw from the fact that you did give it to him?

HEDDA [*lets her head sink*]. That is true. I did not think of that.

BRACK. Well, fortunately, there is no danger, so long as I say nothing.

HEDDA [*looks up at him*]. So I am in your power, Judge Brack. You have me at your beck and call, from this time forward.

BRACK [*whispers softly*]. Dearest Hedda—believe me—I shall not abuse my advantage.

HEDDA. I am in your power none the less. Subject to your will and your demands. A slave, a slave then! [*Rises impetuously*]. No, I cannot endure the thought of that! Never!

BRACK [*looks half-mockingly at her*]. People generally get used to the inevitable.

HEDDA [*returns his look*]. Yes, perhaps. [*She crosses to the writing-table. Suppressing an involuntary smile, she imitates TESMAN's intonations.*] Well? Are you getting on, George? Eh?

TESMAN. Heaven knows, dear. In any case it will be the work of months.

HEDDA [*as before*]. Fancy that! [*Passes her hands softly through MRS. ELVSTED's hair.*] Doesn't it seem strange to you, Thea? Here are you sitting with Tesman—just as you used to sit with Eilert Lövborg?

MRS. ELVSTED. Ah, if I could only inspire your husband in the same way.

HEDDA. Oh, that will come too—in time.

TESMAN. Yes, do you know, Hedda—I really think I begin to feel something of the sort. But won't you go and sit with Brack again?

HEDDA. Is there nothing I can do to help you two?

TESMAN. No, nothing in the world. [*Turning his head.*] I trust to you to keep Hedda company, my dear Brack.

BRACK [*with a glance at HEDDA*]. With the very greatest of pleasure.

HEDDA. Thanks. But I am tired this evening. I will go in and lie down a little on the sofa.

TESMAN. Yes, do, dear—eh?

[*HEDDA goes into the back room and draws the curtains. A short pause. Suddenly she is heard playing a wild dance on the piano.*]

MRS. ELVSTED [*starts from her chair*]. Oh—what is that?

TESMAN [*runs to the doorway*]. Why, my dearest Hedda don't play dance music to-night! Just think of Aunt Rina! And of Eilert too!

HEDDA [*puts her head out between the curtains*]. And of Aunt Julia. And of all the rest of them.—After this, I will be quiet. [*Closes the curtains again.*]

TESMAN [*at the writing-table*]. It's not good for her to see us at this distressing work. I'll tell you what, Mrs. Elvsted,—you shall take the empty room at Aunt Julia's, and then I

will come over in the evenings, and we can sit and work there—eh?

HEDDA [*in the inner room*]. I hear what you are saying, Tesman. But how am *I* to get through the evenings out here?

TESMAN [*turning over the papers*]. Oh, I daresay Judge Brack will be so kind as to look in now and then, even though I am out.

BRACK [*in the arm-chair, calls out gaily*]. Every blessed evening, with all the pleasure in life, Mrs. Tesman! We shall get on capitally together, we two!

HEDDA [*speaking loud and clear*]. Yes, don't you flatter yourself we will, Judge Brack? Now that you are cock of the walk—

[*A shot is heard within. TESMAN, MRS. ELVSTED, and BRACK leap to their feet.*]

TESMAN. Oh, now she is playing with those pistols again.

[*He throws back the curtains and runs in, followed by MRS. ELVSTED. HEDDA lies stretched on the sofa, lifeless. Confusion and cries. BERTA enters in alarm from the right.*]

TESMAN [*shrieks to BRACK*]. Shot herself! Shot herself in the temple! Fancy that!

BRACK [*half-fainting in the arm-chair*]. Good God!—people don't do such things.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

(1904)

BY

ANTON TCHEKHOFF

English translation by Jennie Covan

Copyright, 1922, 1923, by Morris Gest.
Reprinted by special permission of Brentano's, New York.

CHARACTERS.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA RANEVSKAYA, *a landowner.*
ANYA, *her daughter, aged seventeen.*
VARYA, *her adopted daughter, aged twenty-seven.*
LEONID ANDREIEVITCH GAIEFF, *Liuboff Andreievna's brother.*
YERMOLAI ADEXEIEVITCH LOPAKHIN, *a merchant.*
PETER SERGEIEVITCH TROFIMOFF, *a student.*
BORIS BORISOVITCH SEMYONOFF-PISHCHIK, *a landowner.*
CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA, *a governess.*
SEMYON PANTELEIEVITCH YEPIKHODOFF, *a clerk.*
DUNYASHA (AVDOTYA FYODOROVNA), *a maidservant.*
FIRCE, *an old footman, aged eighty-seven.*
YASHA, *a young footman.*
A Tramp.
A Station-master.
Post-office Clerk.
Guests.
A Servant.

The action takes place on Mme. Ranevskaya's estate.

THE CHERRY ORCHARD

ACT I

A room still called the nursery. One of the doors leads into Anya's room. It is almost sunrise of a day in May. The cherry-trees are in bloom, but the chill of early morning is in the garden. The windows are shut.

[DUNYASHA enters with a candle, and LOPAKHIN with a book in his hand.]

LOPAKHIN. The train has arrived, thank God. What's the time?

DUNYASHA. It will soon be two. [*Blows out candle.*] It is already light.

LOPAKHIN. How late was the train? At least two hours. [*Yawns and stretches himself.*] I certainly made a fool of myself! I came here on purpose to meet them at the station, and then overslept myself . . . in my chair. It's a pity. I wish you'd called me.

DUNYASHA. I thought you'd gone. [*Listening.*] I think I hear them coming.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*]. No . . . They have to collect their baggage and so on. . . . [*Pause.*] Liuboff Andreievna has been living abroad for five years; I don't know what she'll be like now . . . She's a good sort — an easy, simple person. I remember when I was a boy of fifteen, my father, who is dead — he used to keep a shop in the village here — hit me with his fist, and my nose bled . . . We had gone into the yard for something or other, and he was a little drunk. Liuboff Andreievna, as I remember her now, was still young, and very slight, and she took me to the wash-stand here in this very room, the nursery. She said, "Don't cry, my small

peasant, all wounds heal at last." [Pause.] . . . Small peasant! My father was a peasant, true, but here I am in a white vest and brown shoes . . . like a pearl in an oyster shell. I'm rich now, with lots of money, but just think about it and examine me, and you'll find I'm still a peasant to the core. [Turns over the pages of his book.] Here I've been reading this book, but I understand nothing. I read and fell asleep. [Pause.]

DUNYASHA. The dogs didn't sleep all night; they feel that their masters are coming.

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with you, Dunyasha.

DUNYASHA. My hands are shaking. I am going to faint.

LOPAKHIN. You're too sensitive, Dunyasha. You dress just like a lady, and you do your hair like one, too. You shouldn't. You must remember your place in life.

YEPIKHODOFF [*enters with a bouquet. He wears a short jacket and brilliantly polished boots which squeak audibly. He drops the bouquet as he enters, then picks it up.*]. The gardener sent these; says they're to go into the dining-room. [*Gives the bouquet to DUNYASHA.*]

LOPAKHIN. And you'll bring me some kvass.

DUNYASHA. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. There's a frost this morning — three degrees, and the cherry-trees are all in flower. I can't approve of our climate. [*Sighs.*] I can't. Our climate refuses to favor us even this once. And, Yermolai Alexeievitch, allow me to say to you, in addition, that I bought myself a pair of boots two days ago, and I beg to assure you that they squeak in a perfectly intolerable manner. What shall I put on them?

LOPAKHIN. Go away. You bore me.

YEPIKHODOFF. Some misfortune happens to me every day. But I don't complain; I'm used to it, and I even smile at it. [*DUNYASHA comes in and brings LOPAKHIN a glass of kvass.*] I am going. [*Knocks over a chair.*] There. . . . [*Triumphantly.*] There, you see, if I may use the word, what circumstances I am in, so to speak. It is simply extraordinary. [*Exit.*]

DUNYASHA [still] Let me confess to you, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that Yepikhin has proposed to me.

LOPAKHIN. Ah!

DUNYASHA. I don't know what to do about it. He's a nice young man, but every now and then, when he begins talking, you can't understand a word he says. It sounds sincere enough, only I can't understand it. I think I like him. He's madly in love with me. He's an unlucky man; every day something happens to him. We tease him about it. They call him "Two-and-twenty troubles."

LOPAKHIN [*listens*]. There they come, I think.

DUNYASHA. They're coming! What's the matter with me? I'm cold all over.

LOPAKHIN. There they are, really. Let's go and meet them. Will she know me? We haven't seen each other for five years.

DUNYASHA [*excited*]. I shall faint in a minute. . . . Oh, I'm fainting!

[Two carriages are heard driving up to the house. LOPAKHIN and DUNYASHA quickly go out. The stage is empty. There are noises in the adjoining rooms. FIRCE, leaning on a stick, walks quickly across the stage; he has just been to LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. He wears an old-fashioned liver and a tall hat. He is saying something to himself, but not a word can be made out. The noise back stage grows louder and louder. A voice is heard: "Let's go in there." Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, ANYA, and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA leading a little dog on a chain, all dressed in traveling clothes, VARYA in a long coat and with a kerchief on her head. GALEFF, SEMYONOFF-PISHCHIK, LOPAKHIN, DUNYASHA with a parcel and an umbrella, and a servant with suitcases—all cross the room.]

ANYA. Let's go through here. Do you remember this room, mother?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*joyfully, through her tears*]. The nursery!

VARYA. How cold it is! My hands are quite numb. [To

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA.] Your rooms, the white one and the violet one, are just as they used to be, nothing changed.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA.. My dear, beautiful nursery . . . I used to sleep here when I was a baby. [*Kisses her brother, then VARYA, then her brother again.*] And Varya is just as she used to be, exactly like a nun. And I recognized Dunyasha. [*Kisses her.*]

GAIEFF. The train was two hours late. There was no time for punctuality?

CHARLOTTA [*to PISHCHIK*]. My dog eats nuts, too.

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. Just imagine! [*All leave except ANYA and DUNYASHA.*]

DUNYASHA. We did have to wait for you! [*Takes off ANYA'S cloak and hat.*]

ANYA. For four nights on the journey I didn't sleep. I'm awfully cold.

DUNYASHA. You left during Lent, when it was snowing and frosty, but now? Darling! [*Laughs and kisses her.*] We did have to wait for you, my darling pet! . . . I must tell you at once, I can't wait a minute.

ANYA [*listlessly*]. Something else now . . . ?

DUNYASHA. The clerk, Yepikhodoff, proposed to me after Easter.

ANYA. Always the same . . . [*Puts her hair straight.*] I've lost all my hairpins . . . [*She is very tired, and even staggers as she walks.*]

DUNYASHA. I don't know what to think about it. He loves me, he loves me so much!

ANYA [*looks into her room; in a gentle voice*]. My room, my windows, as if I'd never left! I'm at home! To-morrow morning I'll get up and run out into the garden . . . Oh, if I could only sleep! I didn't sleep the whole journey, I was so restless.

DUNYASHA. Peter Sergeievitch came two days ago.

ANYA [*joyfully*]. Peter!

DUNYASHA. He sleeps in the bath-house, he lives there. He said he was afraid he'd be in the way. [*Looks at her*

watch.] I should call him, but Varvara Mihkailovna told me not to. "Don't wake him," she said.

[*Enter VARYA, a bunch of keys hanging from her belt.*]

VARYA. Dunyasha, coffee, quick. Mother wishes some.

DUNYASHA. In a moment. [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Well, you've come, thank God. Home again. [*Caressing her.*] My darling is home again! My pretty one is back at last!

ANYA. I had an awful time, I tell you.

VARYA. I can just imagine it!

ANYA. I went away in Holy Week; it was very cold then. Charlotta talked the whole way and would go on performing her tricks. Why did you force her on me?

VARYA. You couldn't go alone, darling, at seventeen!

ANYA. We went to Paris; it's cold there and snowing. I talk French perfectly dreadfully. My mother lives on the fifth floor. I go to her, and find her there with several Frenchmen, women, an old abbé with a book, and everything wreathed in tobacco smoke and the whole place so uninviting. I suddenly became very sorry for mother — so sorry that I took her head in my arms and hugged her and wouldn't let her go. Then mother started hugging me and crying. . . .

VARYA [*weeping*]. Don't say any more, don't say any more . . .

ANYA. She's already sold her villa near Mentone; she has nothing left, nothing. And I haven't a kopeck either; we only just managed to get here. And mother won't understand! We had dinner at a station; she asked for all the expensive things, and tipped the waiters one ruble each. And Charlotta too. Yasha demands a share, too — It is simply awful. Mother has a footman now, Yasha; we've brought him along.

ANYA. How's business? Has the interest been paid?

VARYA. Not much chance of that.

ANYA. Oh God, oh God . . .

VARYA. The place will be sold in August.

ANYA. Oh God . . .

LOPAKHIN [*looks in at the door and moos*]. Moo! [*Exit.*]

VARYA [*through her tears*]. I'd like to . . . [*Shakes her fist.*]

ANYA [*embraces VARYA, softly*]. Varya, has he proposed to you? [*VARYA shakes her head.*] But he loves you. . . . Why don't you decide? Why do you keep on waiting?

VARYA. I'm afraid it will all come to nothing. He's a busy man. I'm not his sort . . . he pays no attention to me. Bless the man, I don't wish to see him. . . . But everybody talks about our marriage, everybody congratulates me, and there's nothing in it at all, it's all like a dream. [*A different voice.*] You have a brooch that looks like a bee.

ANYA [*wistfully*]. Mother bought it. [*Goes into her room, and talks lightly, like a child.*] In Paris I went up in a balloon!

VARYA. My darling has come back, my pretty one is home again! [*DUNYASHA has already returned with the coffee-pot and is making coffee.*] I go about all day, looking after the house, and I think all the time, if only you could marry a rich man, I'd be happy and would go away somewhere by myself, perhaps to Kieff . . . or to Moscow, and so on, from one holy place to another. I'd tramp and tramp. That would be splendid!

ANYA. The birds are singing in the garden. What time is it now?

VARYA. It must be getting on towards three. It's time you went to sleep, darling. [*Goes into ANYA'S room.*] Splendid!

[*Enter YASHA with a plaid shawl and a traveling bag.*]

YASHA [*crossing the stage; politely*]. May I go this way?

DUNYASHA. I hardly recognized you, Yasha. You have changed abroad.

YASHA. Hm . . . and who are you?

DUNYASHA. When you went away I was only so high. [*Showing with her hand.*] I'm Dunyasha, the daughter of Fyodor Kozoyedoff. You don't remember?

YASHA. Oh, you small cucumber! [*Looks round and embraces her. She screams and drops a saucer. YASHA goes out quickly.*]

VARYA [*in the doorway; in an angry voice*]. What's that?

DUNYASHA [*through her tears*]. I've broken a saucer.

VARYA. It may bring luck.

ANYA [*coming out of her room*]. We must tell mother that Peter's here.

VARYA. I told them not to call him.

ANYA [*thoughtfully*]. Father died six years ago, and a month later my brother Grisha was drowned in the river—such a dear little boy of seven! Mother couldn't bear it; she went away, away, without looking round. . . . [*Shudders.*] How I understand her; if only she knew! [*Pause.*] And Peter Trofimoff was Grisha's tutor, he might remind her. . . .

[*Enter FIRCE in a short jacket and white vest. Goes to the coffee-pot.*]

FIRCE. Madame is going to have a bite here. [*He is pre-occupied, putting on white gloves.*] Is the coffee ready? [*To DUNYASHA, severely.*] You!

DUNYASHA. Oh, dear me . . . ! [*Leaving hurriedly.*]

FIRCE [*fussing round the coffee-pot*]. Oh, you bungler . . . [*Murmurs to himself.*] Back from Paris . . . the master went to Paris once . . . in a carriage . . . [*Laughs.*]

VARYA. What are you mumbling, Firce?

FIRCE. I beg your pardon? [*Joyfully.*] The mistress is home again. I've lived to see her! I don't care if I die now . . . [*Weeps with joy.*]

[*Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, GAIEFF, LOPAKHIN, and SEMYONOFF-PISHCHIK, the latter in a long jacket of thin cloth and loose trousers. GAIEFF, coming in, moves his arms and body about as if he were playing billiards.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let me remember now. Red into the corner! Twice into the center!

GAIEFF. Right into the pocket! Once upon a time you and I, sister, both slept in this room, and now I'm fifty-one; it does seem strange.

LOPAKHIN. Yes, time does fly!

GAIEFF. What?

LOPAKHIN. I said that time does fly.

GAIEFF. It smells of patchouli here.

ANYA. I'm going to bed. Good-night, mother. [*Kisses her.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My dear little child. [*Kisses her hand.*] Glad to be at home? I can't get over it.

ANYA. Good-night, uncle.

GAIEFF. [*Kisses her face and hands.*] God be with you. How you do resemble your mother! [*To his sister.*] You were just like her at her age, Liuba.

[*ANYA gives her hand to LOPAKHIN and PISHCHIK and goes out shutting the door behind her.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. She's awfully tired.

PISHCHIK. It's a very long journey.

VARYA [*to LOPAKHIN and PISHCHIK*]. Well, gentlemen, it's getting on toward three. High time to retire.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*laughs*]. You're just the same as ever, Varya. [*Draws her close and kisses her.*] I'll have some coffee now; then we'll all go. [*FIRCE lays a cushion under her feet.*] Thank you, dear. I'm used to coffee. I drink it day and night. Thank you, dear old man. [*Kisses FIRCE.*]

VARYA. I'll go and see whether they've brought in all the luggage. [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is it really I who am sitting here? [*Laughs.*] I feel like jumping about and waving my arms. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] But suppose I'm dreaming! God knows I love my own country, I love it dearly; I couldn't look out of the railway carriage, I cried so much. [*Through her tears.*] Still, I must have my coffee. Thank you, Firce. Thank you, dear old man. I'm so glad you're still with us.

FIRCE. The day before yesterday.

GAIEFF. He doesn't hear well.

LOPAKHIN. I have to go to Kharkoff by the five o'clock train. I'm awfully sorry! I should like to have a look at you, to gossip a little. You're as fine-looking as ever.

PISHCHIK [*breathes heavily*]. Even finer-looking . . . dressed in Paris fashion . . . confound it all.

LOPAKHIN. Your brother, Leonid Andreievitch, says I'm

a snob, a usurer, but that is absolutely nothing to me. Let him talk. Only I do wish you would believe in me as you once did, that your wonderful, touching eyes would look at me as they used to. Merciful God! My father was the serf of your grandfather and your own father, but you—more than anybody else—did so much for me once upon a time that I've forgotten everything and love you as if you were one of my own family. . . . and even more.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I can't sit still, I can't! [*Jumps up and walks about in great excitement.*] I'll never survive this happiness. . . . You can laugh at me; I'm a silly woman . . . My dear little cupboard. [*Kisses cupboard.*] My little table.

GAIEFF. Nurse died during your absence.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*sits and drinks coffee*]. Yes, God rest her soul. I heard by letter.

GAIEFF. And Anastasia died, too. Peter Kosoy has left me and now lives in town with the Commissioner of Police. [*Takes a box of candy out of his pocket and sucks a piece.*]

PISHCHIK. My daughter, Dashenka, sends her love.

LOPAKHIN. I wish to say something very pleasant, very delightful, to you. [*Looks at his watch.*] I'm going away at once, I haven't much time . . . but I'll tell you all about it in two or three words. As you already know, your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts, and the sale is arranged for August 22; but you needn't be alarmed, dear madam, you may sleep in peace; there's a way out. Here's my plan. Please listen carefully! Your estate is only thirteen miles from town, the railway runs past it and if the cherry orchard and the land by the river are broken up into building parcels and are then leased as villa sites, you'll have at least twenty-five thousand rubles a year income.

GAIEFF. How utterly absurd!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I don't understand you at all, Yermolai Alexeievitch.

LOPAKHIN. You will get twenty-five rubles a year for each dessiatin from the leaseholders at the very least, and if you advertise now, I'm willing to bet that you won't have a vacant

parcel left by the autumn; they'll all go. In a word, you're saved. I congratulate you. Only, of course, you'll have to straighten things out carefully . . . For instance, you'll have to pull down all the old buildings, this house, which is of no use to anybody now, and cut down the old cherry orchard. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Cut it down? My dear man, you must forgive me, but you don't understand anything at all. If there's anything interesting or remarkable in the whole province, it's this cherry orchard of ours.

LOPAKHIN. The only remarkable thing about the orchard is its great size. It bears fruit only every other year, and even then you don't know what to do with the cherries; nobody buys any.

GAIEFF. This orchard is mentioned in the "Encyclopaedia."

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*]. If we can't think of anything and don't make up our minds, then on August 22 both the cherry orchard and the whole estate will be sold at auction. Make up your mind! I swear there's no other way out. You may believe me!

FIRCE. In the old days, forty or fifty years ago, they dried the cherries, soaked them and pickled them, and made jam, and it used to happen that . . .

GAIEFF. Be quiet, Firce.

FIRCE. And then we'd send the dried cherries in carts to Moscow and Kharkoff. And money! And the dried cherries were soft, juicy, sweet, and fragrant. They knew the way. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How was it done?

FIRCE. They've forgotten. Nobody remembers.

PISHCHIK [*to LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA*]. What about Paris? Eh? Did you eat frogs?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I ate crocodiles.

PISHCHIK. Just imagine!

LOPAKHIN. Formerly there were only the gentry and the laborers, in the villages, and now the people who live in villas have arrived. All towns now, even small ones, are surrounded by villas. And it's safe to say that in twenty

years' time the villa residents will have increased tremendously. At present they sit on their balconies, and drink tea, but it may well happen that they'll commence to cultivate their patches of land, and then your cherry orchard will be happy, rich, glorious.

GAIEFF [*angry*]. What nonsense!

[*Enter VARYA and YASHA.*]

VARYA. There are two telegrams for you, mother dear. [*Picks out a key and noisily unlocks an antique cupboard.*] Here they are.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. They're from Paris . . . [*Tears them up without reading them.*] I'm through with Paris.

GAIEFF. And do you know, Liuba, how old this cupboard is? A week ago I pulled out the bottom drawer; I looked and saw numbers carved in it. That cupboard was made exactly a hundred years ago. What do you think of that? What? We could celebrate its jubilee. It hasn't a soul of its own, but still, say what you will, it's a fine piece of furniture.

PISHCHIK. [*astonished*]. A hundred years . . . Just imagine!

GAIEFF. Yes . . . it's a genuine thing. [*Examining it.*] My dear and honored cupboard! I congratulate you on your career, which has for more than a hundred years been devoted to the noble ideals of good and justice; your silent call to productive labor has not decreased in the hundred years [*Weeping.*] during which you have inspired in our generation virtue and courage and faith for a better future, holding before our eyes lofty ideals and the knowledge of a common consciousness. [*Pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You're just the same as ever, Leon.

GAIEFF [*a little confused*]. Off the white on the right, into the corner pocket. Red ball goes into the center pocket!

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*]. It's time I went.

YASHA [*giving LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA her medicine*]. Will you take your pills now?

PISHCHIK. You shouldn't take medicines, dearest; they

do you neither harm nor good . . . Give them to me, dearest. [*Takes the pills, turns them out into the palm of his hand, blows on them, puts them into his mouth, and drinks some kvass.*] There!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*frightened*]. You're mad!

PISCHIK. I've swallowed all the pills.

LOPAKHIN. You greedy man! [*All laugh.*]

FIRCE. They were here in Easter week and ate half a pailful of cucumbers . . . [*Mumbles.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What does he mean?

VARYA. He's been mumbling away for three years. We're used to that.

YASHA. Senile decay.

[*CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA crosses the stage; dressed in white; she is very thin and tightly laced; she has a lorgnette at her waist.*]

LOPAKHIN. Excuse me, Charlotta Ivanovna, I haven't bidden you welcome yet. [*Tries to kiss her hand.*]

CHARLOTTA [*takes her hand away*]. If you let people kiss your hand, then they'll want your elbow, then your shoulder, and then . . .

LOPAKHIN. I'm out of luck to-day! [*All laugh.*] Show us a trick, Charlotta Ivanovna!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Charlotta, do a trick for us!

CHARLOTTA. It's not necessary. I must go to bed. [*Exit.*]

LOPAKHIN. We shall see each other in three weeks. [*Kisses LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA's hand.*] Now, good-bye. It's time I went. [*To GAIEFF.*] See you again. [*Kisses PISCHIK.*] Au revoir. [*Gives his hand to VARYA, then to FIRCE and to YASHA.*] I don't want to go away. [*To LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA.*] If you think about the villas and come to a decision, just let me know, and I'll raise a loan of 50,000 rubles at once. Think about it seriously.

VARYA [*angrily*]. Do go, now!

LOPAKHIN. I'm going, I'm going . . . [*Exit.*]

GAIEFF. Snob. Still, I beg pardon . . . Varya's going to marry him, he's Varya's young man.

VARYA. Don't talk too much, uncle.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not, Varya? I should be glad of it. He's a good man.

PISHCHIK. To speak the honest truth . . . he's a worthy man . . . And my Dashenka . . . also says that . . . she says lots of things. [*Snores, but wakes up again at once.*] But still, dear madam; if you could lend me . . . 240 rubles . . . to pay the interest on my mortgage to-morrow . . .

VARYA [*frightened*]. We haven't it, we haven't it!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. It's quite true. I've nothing at all.

PISHCHIK. You'll manage somehow. [*Laughs.*] I never lose hope. I used to think, "Everything's lost now. I'm a dead man," when, lo and behold, a railway was built across my land . . . and they paid me for it. And something else will happen to-day or to-morrow. Dashenka may win 20,000 rubles . . . she's got a lottery ticket.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. The coffee's all gone, we can go to bed.

FIRCE [*brushing GAIIEFF's trousers; in an insistent tone*]. You are wearing the wrong trousers again. What am I to do with you?

VARYA [*quietly*]. Anya's asleep. [*Opens window quietly.*] The sun has risen already; it isn't cold. Look, mother, dear; what lovely trees! And the air! The starlings are singing!

GAIIEFF [*opens the other window*]. The whole garden is white. You haven't forgotten, Liuba? There's that long avenue going straight, straight, like an arrow; it shines on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You haven't forgotten?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*looks into the garden*]. Oh, my childhood, days of my innocence! In this nursery I used to sleep; I used to look out from here into the orchard. Happiness used to wake with me every morning, and then it was just as it is now; nothing has changed. [*Laughs with joy.*] It's all, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dreary autumns and the cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness, the angels of heaven haven't left you . . . If only I could take this strong burden from my breast and shoulders, if I could forget my past!

GAIEFF. Yes, and they'll sell this orchard to pay off the debts. How strange it seems!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Look, there's my dead mother walking in the orchard . . . dressed in white! [*Laughs with joy.*] That's she.

GAIEFF. Where?

VARYA. God be with you, mother dear!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Nobody is there; I thought I saw somebody. On the right, at the turning by the summer-house, a little white tree bent down, resembling a woman. [*Enter TROFIMOFF in a worn student uniform and spectacles.*] What a marvelous garden! White masses of flowers, the blue sky. . . .

TROFIMOFF. Liuboff Andreievna! [*She looks round at him.*] I only wish to pay my respects to you, and I'll go away. [*Kisses her hand warmly.*] I was told to wait till the morning, but I didn't have the patience. [*LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA looks surprised.*]

VARYA [*crying*]. It's Peter Trofimoff.

TROFIMOFF. Peter Trofimoff, once the tutor of your Grisha . . . Have I changed so much? [*LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA embraces him and cries softly.*]

GAIEFF [*confused*]. That's enough, that's enough, Liuba.

VARYA [*weeps*]. But I told you, Peter, to wait till tomorrow.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My Grisha . . . my boy . . . Grisha . . . my son.

VARYA. What are we to do, dear mother? It's the will of God.

TROFIMOFF [*softly, through his tears*]. It's all right, it's all right.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*still weeping*]. My boy's dead; he was drowned. Why? Why, my friend? [*Softly.*] Anya's asleep in there. I am speaking so loudly, making so much noise . . . Well, Peter? What's made you look so bad? Why have you grown so old?

TROFIMOFF. In the train an old woman called me a decayed gentleman.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You were quite a boy then, a jolly little student, and now your hair has grown thin and you wear spectacles. Are you really still a student? [*Goes to the door.*]

TROFIMOFF. I suppose I shall always be a student.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. [*Kisses her brother, then VARYA.*] Well, let's go to bed . . . And you've grown older, Leonid.

PISHCHIK [*follows her*]. Yes, we must go to bed . . . Oh, my gout! I'll stay the night here. If only, Liuboff Andreievna, my dear, you could get me 240 rubles to-morrow morning —

GAIEFF. Still the same story.

PISHCHIK. Two hundred and forty rubles . . . to pay the interest on the mortgage.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I haven't any money, dear man.

PISHCHIK. I'll give it back . . . it's a small sum . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well then, Leonid will give it to you . . . Let him have it, Leonid.

GAIEFF. By all means; hold out your hand.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not? He wants it; he'll give it back.

[LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, TROFIMOFF, PISHCHIK and FIRCE go out. GAIEFF, VARYA, and YASHA remain.]

GAIEFF. My sister hasn't lost the habit of throwing money away. [*To YASHA.*] Don't come near me: you smell like a chicken-coop!

YASHA [*grins*]. You are just the same as ever, Leonid Andreievitch.

GAIEFF. Really? [*To VARYA.*] What's he saying?

VARYA [*to YASHA*]. Your mother has come from the village; she's been sitting in the servants' room since yesterday, and wishes to see you . . .

YASHA. Bless the woman!

VARYA. Shameless man.

YASHA. A lot of use there is in her coming. She might just as well have come to-morrow. [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Mother hasn't altered a bit, she's just as she al-

ways was. She'd give away everything, if the idea only entered her head.

GAIEFF. Yes . . . [*Pause.*] If there's any illness for which people have a remedy of remedies, you may be sure that particular illness is incurable. I work my brains as hard as I can. I've several remedies, very many, and that really means I've none at all. It would be nice to inherit a fortune from somebody, it would be nice to marry off our Anya to a rich man, it would be nice to go to Yaroslavl and try my luck with my aunt the Countess. My aunt is very, very rich.

VARYA [*weeps*]. If only God would help us.

GAIEFF. Don't cry. My aunt's very rich, but she doesn't like us. My sister, in the first place, married a lawyer, not an aristocrat . . . [*ANYA appears in the doorway.*] She not only married a man who was not an aristocrat, but she behaved in a way which cannot be described as proper. She's nice and kind and charming and I'm very fond of her, but say what you will in her favor and you still have to admit that she's bad; you can feel it in her slightest movements.

VARYA [*whispers*]. Anya's in the doorway.

GAIEFF. Really? [*Pause.*] It's curious, something's blown into my right eye . . . I can't see out of it properly. And on Thursday, when I was at the District Court . . .

[*Enter ANYA.*]

VARYA. Why aren't you in bed, Anya?

ANYA. I can't sleep. It's no use.

GAIEFF. My darling. [*Kisses ANYA's face and hands.*] My child. [*Crying.*] You're not my niece, you're my angel, you're my all . . . Believe in me, believe . . .

ANYA. I do believe you, uncle. Everybody loves and respects you . . . but, uncle dear, you should say nothing, no more than that. What were you saying just now about my mother, about your own sister! Why did you say such things?

GAIEFF. Yes, yes. [*Covers his face with her hand.*] Yes, really, it was terrible. Save me, my God! And only just now I made a speech before a cupboard . . . it's so silly! And only when I'd finished I knew how silly it was.

VARYA. Yes, uncle dear, you really should say less. Keep quiet, that's all.

ANYA. You'd be so much happier if you only kept quiet.

GAIEFF. All right, I'll be quiet. [*Kisses their hands.*] I'll be quiet. But let's talk business. On Thursday I was in the District Court, and a lot of us met there and we began to talk of this, that, and the other, and now I think I can arrange a loan to pay the interest to the bank.

VARYA. If only God would help us!

GAIEFF. I'll go on Tuesday. I'll talk to you about it again. [*To VARYA.*] Don't cry. [*To ANYA.*] Your mother will have a talk with Lopakhin; he, of course, won't refuse . . . And when you've rested you'll go to Yaroslavl to the Countess, your grandmother. So you see, we shall have three irons in the fire, and we shall be safe. We'll pay the interest. I'm certain. [*Puts some candy in his mouth.*] I swear on my honor, on anything you wish, that the estate will not be sold! [*Excitedly.*] I swear on my happiness! Here's my hand on it! You may call me a dishonorable sinner if I let it be sold at auction! I swear by all I am!

ANYA [*calm again and happy*]. How good and clever you are, uncle. [*Embraces him.*] I'm happy now! I'm happy! All's well!

[*Enter FIRCE.*]

FIRCE [*reproachfully*]. Leonid Andreievitch, don't you fear God? When are you going to bed?

GAIEFF. Soon, soon. You go away, Firce. I'll undress myself. Well, children, au revoir . . . ! I'll tell you the details to-morrow, but let's go to bed now. [*Kisses ANYA and VARYA.*] I'm a man of the eighties . . . People don't praise those years much, but I can still say that I've suffered for my beliefs. The peasants don't love me for nothing, I assure you. We have to learn how to understand the peasants! We should learn how . . .

ANYA. You're doing it again, uncle!

VARYA. Be quiet, uncle!

FIRCE [*angrily*]. Leonid Andreievitch!

GAIEFF. I'm coming, I'm coming . . . Go to bed now. Off

two cushions into the center! I turn over a new leaf . . .
[*Exit. FIRCE goes out after him.*]

ANYA. I'm more quiet now. I don't wish to go to Yaroslavl, I don't like grandmother; but I'm calm now, thanks to uncle. [*Sits down.*]

VARYA. It's time to go to sleep. I'll go. There have been amazing things happening here during your absence. In the old servants' quarter of the house, as you know, only the old people live—little old Yefim and Polya and Yevstigny, and Karp as well. They commenced letting tramps or the like spend the night there—I said nothing. Then I heard that they were saying I had ordered them to be fed on peas and nothing else; from meanness, you see . . . And it was all Yevstigny's doing. Very well, I thought, if that's what the matter is, just you wait. So I call Yevstigny . . . [*Yawns.*] He comes. "What's this," I say. "Yevstigny, you old fool" . . . [*Looks at ANYA.*] Anya dear! [*Pause.*] She's dozed off . . . [*Takes ANYA'S arm.*] Let's go to bed . . . Come along! . . . [*Leads her.*] My darling's gone to sleep! Come on . . . [*They go. In the distance, the other side of the orchard, a shepherd plays his pipe. TROFIMOFF crosses the stage and stops when he sees VARYA and ANYA.*] Sh! She's asleep, asleep. Come on, dear.

ANYA [*quietly, half-asleep*]. I'm so tired . . . I hear bells . . . uncle, dear! Mother and uncle!

VARYA. Come on, dear, come on! [*They go into ANYA'S room.*]

TROFIMOFF [*deeply moved*]. Sunshine! Springtime of my life!

ACT II.

A field. An old, tumble-down shrine, which has been long abandoned; near it a well and large stones, which apparently are old tombstones, and an old garden seat. The road to Gaieff's estate is seen. On one side dark poplars rise, behind them the cherry orchard begins. In the distance is a row of telegraph poles, and on the far horizon are the in-

distinct signs of a large town, which can be seen only on the finest and clearest days. It is near sunset.

[CHARLOTTA, YASHA, and DUNYASHA are sitting on a bench. YEPIKHODOFF stands nearby playing on a guitar; all seem thoughtful. CHARLOTTA wears a man's old peaked cap; she has unslung a rifle from her shoulders and is straightening the strap-buckle.]

CHARLOTTA [*thoughtfully*]. I haven't a real passport. I don't know how old I am, but I think I'm young. When I was a little girl my father and mother used to travel from fair to fair and give very good performances, and I used to do the somersault and various little things. And when papa and mamma died, a German lady took me to her home and brought me up. I liked it. I grew up and became a governess. And where I came from and who I am, I don't know. . . . Who my parents were — perhaps they weren't married — I don't know. [*Takes a cucumber from her pocket and eats.*] I don't know anything. [*Pause.*] I do wish to talk, but I haven't anybody to talk to. . . . I haven't anybody at all.

YEPIKHODOFF [*plays on the guitar and sings*].

What do I care for this noisy earth?

What do I care for friend and foe?

I like playing on the mandolin!

DUNYASHA. That's a guitar, not a mandolin. [*Looks at herself in a little pocket mirror and powders herself.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. For a lovelorn lunatic, this constitutes a mandolin. [*Sings.*]

Oh would the fire of love

Warm my pitiful heart!

[YASHA sings, too.]

CHARLOTTA. These people sing so badly. . . . Bah! Like jackals.

DUNYASHA [*to YASHA*]. Still it must be nice to live abroad.

YASHA. Yes, it is. I can't differ from you there. [*Yawns and lights a cigar.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. That is perfectly natural. Abroad everything is in such complete harmony.

YASHA. That goes without saying.

YEPIKHODOFF. I'm an educated man, I read various remarkable books, but I cannot understand where I want to go, myself — whether to keep on living or to shoot myself, as is were. So at any rate, I always carry a revolver about with me. Here it is. [*Shows a revolver.*]

CHARLOTTA. I've finished. Now I'll go. [*Slings the rifle over her shoulder.*] You, Yepikhodoff, are a very clever man and very frightful; women must be madly in love with you. Brrr! [*Going.*] These wise people are all so stupid. I've nobody to talk to. I'm always alone, alone; I've nobody at all . . . and I don't know who I am or why I live. [*Exit slowly.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. As a matter of fact, independently of everything else, I must express my conviction, among other things, that fate has been as merciless in her dealings with me as a storm is to a small ship. Suppose, let us grant, I am wrong; then why did I wake up this morning, for example, and behold an enormous spider on my chest as big as this? [*Shows with both hands.*] And if I do drink kvass, why must I always find in the glass such an unsociable animal as a cockroach! [*Pause.*] Have you read Buckle? [*Pause.*] May I have a few words with you, Avdotya Fyodorovna?

DUNYASHA. Go on!

YEPIKHODOFF. I should prefer to be alone with you. [*Sighs.*]

DUNYASHA [*shy*]. Very well, only please bring me my cloak first. . . . It's by the cupboard. It's a little damp here.

YEPIKHODOFF. Very well. . . . I'll bring it. . . . Now I know what to do with my revolver. [*Takes guitar and exit, strumming.*]

YASHA. Two-and-twenty troubles! A foolish man, between you and me and the gatepost. [*Yawns.*]

DUNYASHA. [*Pause.*] I hope to goodness he won't shoot himself. [*Pause.*] I'm so nervous, so worried. I entered service when I was quite a little girl, and now I'm not used

to common life, and my hands are as white as a lady's. I'm so tender and so delicate now, respectable and afraid of everything. . . . I'm so frightened. And I don't know what will happen to my nerves if you deceive me, Yasha.

YASHA [*kisses her*]. Tiny cucumber! Of course, every girl must respect herself; there's nothing I dislike more than a badly behaved girl.

DUNYASHA. I'm so much in love with you; you're educated, you can talk about everything. [*Pause.*]

YASHA [*yawns*]. Yes, I think that if a girl loves anybody, it means she's immoral. [*Pause.*] It's nice to smoke a cigar out in the open air. . . . [*Listens.*] Somebody's coming. It's the mistress, and people with her. [*DUNYASHA embraces him suddenly.*] Go to the house, as if you'd been bathing in the river; go by this path, or they'll run across you and will think I've been meeting you. I can't stand that sort of thing.

DUNYASHA [*coughs quietly*]. Your cigar has given me a headache.

[*Exit. YASHA remains, sitting by the shrine. Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, GAIEFF, and LOPAKHIN.*]

LOPAKHIN. You must make up your mind definitely — there's no time to waste. The question is perfectly simple. Are you willing to let the land for villas or no? Just one word, yes or no? Just one word!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Who's smoking bad cigars here? [*Sits.*]

GAIEFF. They built that railway; that's made this place very convenient. [*Sits.*] Went to town and had lunch . . . red in the center! I'd like to go to the house now and have just one game.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You'll have time.

LOPAKHIN. Just one word! [*Imploringly.*] Give me an answer!

GAIEFF [*yawns*]. Really!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*looks in her purse*]. I had a lot of money yesterday, but there's very little left to-day. My poor Varya feeds everybody on milk soup to save money; in the kitchen the old people get peas only; and I spend

recklessly. [*Drops the purse, scattering gold coins.*] There, money all over the place.

YASHA. Permit me to pick them up. [*Collects the coins.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Please do Yasha. And why did I go and lunch there? . . . A terrible restaurant with a band and tablecloths smelling of soap. . . . Why do you drink so much, Leon? Why do you eat so much? Why do you talk so much? You talked too much again to-day in the restaurant, and it wasn't at all to the point—about the seventies and about decadents. And to whom? Talking to the waiters about decadents! Imagine!

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

GAIEFF [*waves his hand*]. I can't be cured, that's obvious. . . . [*Irritably to YASHA.*] What's the matter? Why do you always manage to keep in front of me?

YASHA [*laughs*]. I can't listen to your voice without laughing.

GAIEFF [*to his sister*]. Either he or I . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Go away Yasha. Go!

YASHA [*gives purse to LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA*]. I'll go at once. [*Hardly able to keep from laughing.*] This minute. . . . [*Exit.*]

LOPAKHIN. That rich man Deriganoff is preparing to buy your estate. They say he'll attend the sale in person.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Where did you hear that?

LOPAKHIN. They say so in town.

GAIEFF. Our aunt in Yaroslavl promised to send something, but I don't know when or how much.

LOPAKHIN. How much will she send? A hundred thousand rubles? Or two, perhaps?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'd be glad if we get ten or fifteen thousand.

LOPAKHIN. You must excuse my saying so, but I've never met such frivolous people as you before, or anybody so un-businesslike and peculiar. Here I am telling you in plain language that your estate will be sold, and you don't seem to understand.

LOPAKHIN. I tell you every day. Every day I say the same thing. Both the cherry orchard and the land must be leased for villas and at once,—the auction is staring you in the face: Understand! Once you definitely make up your minds to the villas, you'll have as much money as you wish and you'll be saved.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Villas and villa residents—it's so vulgar, pardon me.

GAIEFF. I agree with you entirely.

LOPAKHIN. I must cry or yell or faint. I can't! You're too much for me! [*To GAIEFF.*] You old woman!

GAIEFF. Really!

LOPAKHIN. Old woman! [*Going out.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*frightened*]. No, don't go away, stop; be a dear. Please. Perhaps we'll find some way out!

LOPAKHIN. There is nothing to think about.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Please don't go. It's nicer when you're here. . . . [*Pause.*] I keep on waiting for something to happen, as if the house were going to collapse over our heads.

GAIEFF [*thinking deeply*]. Double in the corner . . . across the center.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We have been too sinful. . . .

LOPAKHIN. What sins have you been guilty of?

GAIEFF [*puts candy in his mouth*]. They say that I've wasted all my money in buying candy. [*Laughs.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Oh, my sins . . . I've always scattered money about without being able to control myself, like a madwoman, and I married a man who made nothing but debts. My husband died of champagne—he drank terribly—and to my misfortune, I fell in love with another man and went off with him, and just at that time—it was my first punishment, a blow that struck me squarely on the head—here, in the river . . . my boy was drowned, and I went away, abroad, never to return, never to see this river again. . . . I closed my eyes and ran without thinking, but he ran after me . . . without mercy, without respect. I bought a villa near Mentone because he fell ill there,

and for three days I knew no rest, day or night; the sick man wore me out, and my soul dried up. And last year, when they had sold the villa to pay my debts, I went to Paris, and there he robbed me of all I had and threw me over and went off with another woman. I tried to poison myself. . . . It was so silly, so shameful . . . And suddenly I longed to go back to Russia, my own country, with my little daughter . . . [*Wipes her tears.*] Lord, Lord be merciful to me, forgive my sins! Punish me no more! [*Takes a telegram from her pocket.*] I had this to-day from Paris. . . . He begs my forgiveness, he implores me to return . . . [*Tears it up.*] Don't I hear music? [*Listens.*]

GAIEFF. That is our famous Jewish band. You remember — four violins, a flute, and a double-bass.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. So it still exists? It would be nice if they came some evening.

LOPAKHIN [*listens*]. •I can't hear. . . . [*Sings quietly.*] "For money will the Germans make a Frenchman of a Russian." [*Laughs.*] I saw such an awfully funny thing at the theatre last night.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'm quite sure there wasn't anything funny at all. You shouldn't go and see plays, you ought to go and look at yourself. What a drab life you lead! What a lot of unnecessary things you say!

LOPAKHIN. It's true. To speak the honest truth, we live a silly life. [*Pause.*] My father was a peasant, an idiot, he understood nothing, he didn't teach me, he was always drunk, and always beat me. As a matter of fact, I'm a fool and an idiot, too. I've never learned anything, my handwriting is bad, I write so that I'm quite ashamed before people, like a pig!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You should marry, my friend.

LOPAKHIN. Yes . . . that's true.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why not our Varya? She's a nice girl.

LOPAKHIN. Yes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. She's a simple, unaffected girl.

works all day, and, what matters most, she's in love with you. And you've liked her for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Well? I don't mind . . . She's a nice girl.
[*Pause.*]

GAIEFF. I'm offered a place in a bank. Six thousand rubles a year . . . Did you hear?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What's the matter with you! Stay where you are . . .

[*Enter FIRCE with an overcoat.*]

FIRCE [*to GAIEFF*]. Please sir, put this on, it's damp.

GAIEFF [*putting it on*]. You're a nuisance, old man.

FIRCE. It's all very well. . . . You went away this morning without telling me. [*Examining GAIEFF.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How old you've grown, FIRCE!

FIRCE. I beg your pardon?

LOPAKHIN. She says you've grown very old!

FIRCE. I've lived a long time. They were getting ready to marry me before your father was born . . . [*Laughs.*] And when the Emancipation came I was already first valet. Only I didn't agree with the Emancipation and remained with my masters . . . [*Pause.*] I remember everybody was happy, but they didn't know why.

LOPAKHIN. It was very good for them in the old days. At any rate, they beat them formerly.

FIRCE [*not hearing*]. Rather. The peasants kept their distance from the masters and the masters kept their distance from the peasants, but now everything is in a muddle, and you can't make head or tail of anything.

GAIEFF. Be quiet, Firce. I have to go to town to-morrow. I have the promise of an introduction to a General who may lend me money on a note.

LOPAKHIN. Nothing will come of it. And you won't pay your interest, don't you worry.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. He's out of his head. There's no General at all.

[*Enter TROFIMOFF, ANYA, and VARYA.*].

GAIEFF. Here, come on, folks!

ANYA. Mother's sitting down here.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*tenderly*]. Come, come, my dears . . . [*Embracing ANYA and VARYA.*] If you two only knew how much I love you. Sit down next to me, like that. [*All sit down.*]

LOPAKHIN. Our eternal student is always with the ladies.

TROFIMOFF. That's none of your business.

LOPAKHIN. He'll soon be fifty, and he's still a student.

TROFIMOFF. Stop your silly jokes!

LOPAKHIN. Getting angry, eh, silly?

TROFIMOFF. Shut up, can't you?

LOPAKHIN [*laughs*]. I wonder what you think of me?

TROFIMOFF. I think, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that you're rich, and you'll soon be a millionaire. Just as the wild beast which eats everything it finds is needed to make certain changes in cosmic matter, so you are needed too. [*All laugh.*]

VARYA. Better tell us something about the planets, Peter.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. No, let's continue yesterday's discussion.

TROFIMOFF. What was it about?

GAIEFF. About the proud man.

TROFIMOFF. Yesterday we talked for a long time, but we arrived at no conclusion. In your opinion there's something mystic in pride. Perhaps you are right from your point of view, but if you look at the matter sanely, without complicating it, then what pride can there be, what logic in a man who is imperfectly made, physiologically speaking, and who in the vast majority of cases is coarse and stupid and profoundly unhappy? We must stop admiring one another. We must work, nothing more.

GAIEFF. You'll die, all the same.

TROFIMOFF. Who knows? And what does it mean — you'll die? Perhaps a man has a hundred senses, and when he dies only the five known to us are destroyed and the remaining ninety-five are left alive.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. How clever of you, Peter!

LOPAKHIN [*ironically*]. Oh, awfully!

TROFIMOFF. The human race progresses, perfecting its

powers. Everything that is unattainable now will some day be near and intelligible, but we must work, we must help with all our energy, those who seek to know the truth. Meanwhile in Russia only a very few of us work. The vast majority of those intellectuals whom I know seek for nothing, do nothing, and are at present incapable of hard work. They call themselves intellectuals, but they use "thou" and "thee" to their servants, they treat the peasants like animals, they learn slowly, they read nothing with discernment, they do absolutely nothing, they gabble on about science, about art they understand little. They are all serious, they all have severe faces, they all talk about important things. They philosophize, and at the same time, the vast majority of us, ninety-nine out of a hundred, live like savages, fighting and cursing on the slightest excuse, have filthy table manners, sleep in the dirt, in stuffiness among fleas, stinks, smells, moral stench, and so on. . . . And it's obvious that all our nice talk is only carried on to delude ourselves and others. Tell me, where are those crèches we hear so much of? And where are those reading-rooms? People only write novels about them; they don't really exist. Only dirt, coarseness, and Asiatic barbarism really exist. . . . I'm afraid; and I don't like serious faces at all. I don't like serious conversation. Let's say no more about it.

LOPAKHIN. You know, I get up at five every morning, I work till evening, I am always dealing with money—my own and other people's—and I see what others are like. You have only to start doing anything at all, and you'll find out how few honest, honorable people there are. Sometimes, when I can't sleep, I think: "Oh Lord, you've given us huge forests, infinite fields, and endless horizons, and we, living here, ought really to be giants."

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You want giants, do you? . . . They're only good in stories, and even there they frighten one. [YEPIKHODOFF enters at the back of the stage playing his guitar. LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA speaks thoughtfully.] Yepikhodoff has come.

ANYA. [thoughtfully]. Yepikhodoff has come.

GAIEFF. The sun's set.

TROFIMOFF. Yes.

GAIEFF [*not loudly, as if declaiming*]. Oh, Nature, thou art wonderful, thou shinest with eternal radiance! Oh, beautiful and lofty one, thou whom we call mother, thou containest in thyself life and death, thou livest and destroyest. . . .

VARYA [*entreatingly*]. Uncle, dear!

ANYA. Uncle, you're doing it again!

TROFIMOFF. You'd better double the yellow into the center.

GAIEFF. I'll be quiet, I'll be quiet.

[*They all sit thoughtfully. It is quiet. Only the mumbling of FIRCE is heard. Suddenly a distant sound comes as if from the sky, the sound of a breaking string, which dies away sadly.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What's that?

LOPAKHIN. I don't know. Perhaps a bucket fell, down a well somewhere. But it's a long way off.

GAIEFF. Or perhaps it's some bird . . . like a heron.

TROFIMOFF. Or an owl.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. [*Shudders.*] It's unpleasant, somehow. [*A pause.*]

FIRCE. Before the catastrophe the same thing happened. An owl screamed and the samovar hummed without stopping.

GAIEFF. Before what catastrophe?

FIRCE. Before the Emancipation. [*A pause.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You know, my friends, let's go in; it's evening now. [*To ANYA.*] You've tears in your eyes. . . . What is it, little girl? [*Embraces her.*]

ANYA. It's nothing, mother.

TROFIMOFF. Some one's coming.

[*Enter a Tramp in an old white peaked cap and overcoat. He is slightly drunk.*]

TRAMP. Excuse me, may I go this way straight through to the station?

GAIEFF. You may. Go along this path. . . .

TRAMP. I thank you with all my heart. [*Hiccoughs.*] Lovely weather. . . . [*Declaims.*] My brother, my suffering

brother. . . . Come out on the Volga, you whose groans . . .
[To VARYA.] Mademoiselle, please give a hungry Russian thirty kopecks. . . .

[VARYA screams, frightened.]

LOPAKHIN [*angrily*]. Everybody should have some sort of manners!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*with a start*]. Take this . . . here you are . . . [*Feels in her purse*.] There's no silver . . . It doesn't matter, here's gold.

TRAMP. I am very grateful to you! [*Exit. Laughter*.]

VARYA [*frightened*]. I'm going. I'm going. . . . Oh, mother dear, at home there's nothing for the servants to eat, and yet you gave him gold.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What is to be done with such a fool as I am! At home, I'll give you everything I have. Yermolai Alexeievitch, lend me some more! . . .

LOPAKHIN. Very well.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let's go, it's time. And Varya, we've settled your affairs; I congratulate you.

VARYA [*crying*]. You shouldn't joke about this, mother.

LOPAKHIN. Ophelia! Get thee to a nunnery.

GAIEFF. My hands are trembling; I haven't played billiards for a long time.

LOPAKHIN. Ophelia! Nymph! Remember me in thine orisons!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Come along; it'll soon be supper-time.

VARYA. He frightened me. My heart is beating fast.

LOPAKHIN. Let me remind you, ladies and gentlemen, on August 22nd, the cherry orchard will be sold. Think of that! . . . Think of that! . . .

[*All go out except TROFIMOFF and ANYA*.]

ANYA [*laughs*]. Thanks to the tramp who frightened Varya, we're alone now.

TROFIMOFF. Varya's afraid that we may fall in love with each other and won't leave us alone for days on end. Her narrow mind won't permit her to understand that we are above love. To escape all the petty and deceptive things

which prevent our being happy and free, such is the aim and object of our lives. Forward! We go irresistibly on to that bright star which burns there, in the distance! Don't lag behind, friends!

ANYA [*clapping her hands*]. How beautifully you talk! [*Pause.*] It is glorious here to-day!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, the weather is wonderful.

ANYA. What have you done to me, Peter? I don't love the cherry orchard as I used to. I loved it so tenderly, I thought there was no better place in the world than our orchard.

TROFIMOFF. All Russia is our orchard. The land is great and beautiful, there are many glorious places in it. [*Pause.*] Think, Anya, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all your ancestors were serf-owners, they owned human beings; and now, doesn't something human look at you from every cherry in the orchard, every leaf and every branch? Don't you hear voices . . .? Oh, it's awful, your orchard is frightful; and when in the evening or at night you walk through the orchard, then the old bark on the trees sheds a dim light and the old cherry-trees seem to dream of all that happened a hundred, two hundred years ago, and are burdened with their heavy visions. Still, we've left those two hundred years, behind us. So far we've gained nothing at all—we don't yet know what the past will bring us—we only philosophize, we complain that we are dull, or we drink vodka. For it's so clear that to begin to live in the present we must first redeem the past, and that can be done only by suffering, by strenuous, uninterrupted work. Understand that, Anya.

ANYA. The house in which we live has long ceased to be our house; I shall go away, I give you my word.

TROFIMOFF. If you have the keys of the household, throw them down the well and go away. Be as free as the wind.

ANYA [*enthusiastically*]. How beautifully you said that!

TROFIMOFF. Believe me Anya, believe me! I'm not thirty yet, I'm young, I'm still a student, but I have gone through so much already! I'm as hungry as the winter, I'm ill, I'm

shaken. I'm as poor as a beggar, and where haven't I been — fate has tossed me everywhere! But my soul is always my own; every minute of the day and the night it is filled with glorious and dim visions. I feel that happiness is coming, Anya, I see it already. . . .

ANYA [*thoughtful*]. The moon is rising.

[YEPIKHODOFF is heard playing the same sad song on his guitar. The moon rises. Somewhere near the poplars VARYA is looking for ANYA and calling, "ANYA, where are you?"]

TROFIMOFF. Yes, the moon has risen. [*Pause.*] There is happiness, there it comes; it comes nearer and nearer; I hear its footsteps already. And if we do not see it, we shall not know it, but what does that matter? Others will see it!

THE VOICE OF VARYA. Anya! Where are you?

TROFIMOFF. That's Varya again! [*Angry.*] Disgraceful!

ANYA. Never mind. Let's go to the river. It's nice there.

TROFIMOFF. Let's go. [*They leave.*]

THE VOICE OF VARYA. Anya! Anya!

ACT III

A reception-room, separated by an arch from a drawing-room. Lighted chandelier. A Jewish band, the one referred to in Act II, is heard playing in another room. Evening. In the drawing-room the cotillion is being danced.

[Voice of Semyonoff Pishchik, "*Promenade à une paire!*" Dancers come into the reception-room; the first pair are PISHCHIK and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA; the second TROFIMOFF and LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA; the third ANYA and the Post Office Clerk; the fourth VARYA and the Station-Master, and so on. VARYA is crying gently and dries her eyes as she dances. DUNYASHA is in the last pair. They go off into the drawing-room, shouting, "*Grand rond, balancez!*" and "*Les cavaliers à genoux et remerciez vos dames!*" FIRCE, in a dress-coat, carries a tray with seltzer-water across the stage. Enter PISHCHIK and TROFIMOFF from the drawing-room.]

PISHCHIK. I'm full-blooded and already I've had two

strokes; it's hard for me to dance, but, as they say, if you're in Rome, you must do as the Romans do. I've the constitution of a horse. My late father, who liked a joke, peace to his ashes, used to say, talking of our ancestors, that the ancient stock of the Semyonoff Pishchiks was descended from the identical horse that Caligula appointed senator. . . . [Sits.] But the trouble is, I've no money! A hungry dog believes only in meat. [*Drops off to sleep and wakes up again immediately.*] So I. . . . believe only in money. . . .

TROFIMOFF. Yes. There is something horsy about your figure.

PISHCHIK. Well . . . a horse is a valuable animal . . . you can sell a horse.

[*The sound of billiard playing comes from the next room, VARYA appears under the arch.*]

TROFIMOFF [*teasing*]. Madame Lopakhin! Madame Lopakhin!

VARYA [*angry*]. Decayed gentleman!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, I am a decayed gentleman, and I'm proud of it!

VARYA [*bitterly*]. We've hired the musicians, but how are they to be paid? [*Exit.*]

TROFIMOFF [*to PISHCHIK*]. If you would put to better use the energy which you are wasting day by day, in looking for money to pay interest, I believe you'd finally succeed in moving heaven and earth.

PISHCHIK. Nietzsche . . . a philosopher . . . a very great and famous man . . . a man of enormous brain, says in his books that you can forge bank-notes.

TROFIMOFF. And have you read Nietzsche?

PISHCHIK. Well . . . Dashenka told me. Now I'm in such a position, I wouldn't mind making counterfeit money . . . I have to pay 310 rubles day after to-morrow . . . I've obtained 130 already . . . [*Feels his pockets, nervously.*] I've lost the money! The money's gone! [*Crying.*] Where's the money? [*Joyfully.*] Here it is in the lining. . . . Why I was in a cold sweat!

[*Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*humming a Caucasian dance song*]. What is keeping Leonid so long? What's he doing in town? [*To DUNYASHA.*] Dunyasha, give the musicians some tea.

TROFIMOFF. The business is off, I suppose.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. And the musicians needn't have come, and we needn't have arranged this ball. . . . Well, never mind. . . . [*Sits and sings softly.*]

CHARLOTTA [*gives a pack of cards to PISHCHIK*]. Here's a deck of cards, think of any card you like.

PISHCHIK. I've thought of one.

CHARLOTTA. Now shuffle. All right, now. Pass them over, my dear Mr. Pishchik. Eins, zwei, drei! Now look and you'll find it in your hind pocket.

PISHCHIK [*takes a card out of his hind pocket*]. Eight of spades, quite right! [*Surprised.*] Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA [*holds the deck of cards in the palm of her hand. To TROFIMOFF*]. Now tell me quickly. What's the top card?

TROFIMOFF. Well, the queen of spades.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*To PISHCHIK.*] And now? What card's on top?

PISHCHIK. Ace of hearts.

CHARLOTTA. Right! [*Clasps her hands, the deck of cards vanishes.*] How lovely the weather is to-day. [*A mysterious woman's voice answers her, as if from under the floor, "Oh yes, it's lovely weather, madam."*] You are so beautiful, you are my ideal. [*Voice, "You, Madam, please me very much too."*]

STATION-MASTER [*applauds*]. Madame the ventriloquist, bravo!

PISHCHIK [*surprised*]. Just imagine! Delightful, Charlotta Ivanovna . . . I'm simply in love. . . .

CHARLOTTA. In love? [*Shrugging her shoulders.*] Can you love? Guter Mensch aber schlechter Musikant.

TROFIMOFF [*slaps PISHCHIK on the shoulder.*] Oh, you horse!

CHARLOTTA. Attention, please, here's another trick. [*Takes a shawl from a chair.*] Here's a very nice plaid shawl, I'm

going to sell it. . . . [*Shakes it.*] Won't somebody buy it?

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. Eins, zwei, drei. [*She quickly lifts up the shawl, which is hanging down. ANYA appears behind it; she bows and runs to her mother, hugs her and runs back to the drawing-room amid general applause.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*applauds*]. Bravo, bravo!

CHARLOTTA. Once again! Eins, zwei, drei! [*Lifts the shawl. VARYA appears behind it and bows.*]

PISHCHIK [*astonished*]. Just imagine!

CHARLOTTA. The end! [*Throws the shawl at PISHCHIK, curtseys and runs into the drawing-room.*]

PISHCHIK [*runs after her*]. Little witch! . . . What? Would you? [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Leonid hasn't come yet. I don't understand what is keeping him so long in town! Everything must be over by now. The estate must be sold; or, if the sale never came off, then why does he stay away so long?

VARYA [*tries to soothe her*]. Uncle has bought it. I'm certain of it.

TROFIMOFF [*sarcastically*]. Oh, yes!

VARYA. Grandmother sent him her authority to buy it in her name and transfer the debt to her. She's doing it for Anya. And I'm certain that God will help us and that Uncle will buy it.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Grandmother sent fifteen thousand rubles from Yaroslavl to buy the property in her name—she won't trust us—and that wasn't even enough to pay the interest. [*Covers her face with her hands.*] My fate will be settled to-day, my fate. . . .

TROFIMOFF [*teasing VARYA*]. Madame Lopakhin!

VARYA [*angry*]. Eternal student? He's been expelled from the university, twice already.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why are you growing angry, Varya? He's teasing you about Lopakhin. Well, what of it? You can marry Lopakhin if you wish. He's a good, interesting man. . . . You needn't if you don't wish to; no-

body is going to force you against your will, my darling.

VARYA. I look at the matter seriously, mother dear, to be quiet frank. He's a good man, and I like him.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Then marry him. I don't understand what you're waiting for.

VARYA. I can't propose to him myself, mother dear. People have been talking about him to me for two years now, but he either says nothing, or jokes about it. I understand. He's getting rich, he's busy, he can't bother about me. If I had some money, even a little, even only a hundred rubles, I'd throw up everything and go away. I'd go into a convent.

TROFIMOFF. What bliss!

VARYA [*to TROFIMOFF*]. A student should have common sense! [*Gently, in tears.*] How ugly you are now, Peter, how old you've grown! [*To LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, no longer crying.*] But I can't go on without working, mother dear. I'm eager to be doing something every minute. [*Enter YASHA.*]

YASHA [*nearly laughing*]. Yepikhodoff's broken a billiard cue! [*Exit.*]

VARYA. Why is Yepikhodoff here? Who said he could play billiards? I don't understand these people. [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Don't tease her, Peter, you see that she's unhappy enough without it.

TROFIMOFF. She undertakes too much herself; she is continually interfering in other people's business. The whole summer she gave Anya and me not a moment's peace. She's afraid we'll have a romance all to ourselves. What concern of hers is it? As if I'd ever given her grounds to believe I'd stoop to such vulgarity! We are above love.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Then I suppose I must be beneath love. [*In agitation.*] Why isn't Leonid here? If I only knew whether the estate is sold or not! The catastrophe seems to me so unbelievable that I don't know what to think, I'm all at sea . . . I may scream . . . or do something foolish. Save me, Peter. Say something, say something.

TROFIMOFF. Isn't it all the same whether the estate is sold to-day or not? For a long time it's been a foregone

conclusion that it would be sold. There's no turning back, the path is obliterated. Be calm, dear, you shouldn't deceive yourself; for once in your life, at any rate, you must look the truth straight in the eyes.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. What truth? You see where truth is, and where falsehood is, but I seem to have lost my sight and see nothing. You settle all important questions boldly, but tell me, dear, isn't it because you're young, because you have not as yet had time to suffer in settling any one of these questions? You look forward boldly, but isn't it because you neither feel nor expect anything terrible, because so far life has been hidden from your young eyes? You are bolder, more honest, deeper than we are, but only think, be just a little magnanimous, and have pity on me. I was born here, my father and mother lived here, my grandfather, too. I love this house. I couldn't understand my life without that cherry orchard, and if it really must be sold, sell me with it! [*Embraces TROFIMOFF, kisses his forehead.*] My son was drowned here . . . [*Weeps.*] Have pity on me, good, kind man.

TROFIMOFF. You know that I sympathize with all my heart.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Yes, but it should be said differently. . . . [*Takes another handkerchief, a telegram falls on the floor.*] I'm so sick at heart to-day, you can't imagine. Here it's so noisy, my soul trembles at every sound. I shake all over, and I can't go away by myself, I'm afraid of the silence. Don't judge me harshly, Peter. . . . I love you, as if you belonged to the family. I'd gladly let Anya marry you, I swear it, only dear, you ought to work to finish your studies. You don't do anything, only fate tosses you about from place to place, it's so strange. . . . Isn't it true? Yes? And you ought to do something to your beard to make it grow better. [*Laughs.*] You are funny!

TROFIMOFF [*picking up telegram*]. I don't wish to be a Beau Brummel.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. This telegram's from Paris. I receive one every day. Yesterday and to-day. That wild

man is ill again, he's bad again. . . . He begs for forgiveness, and implores me to come, and I really should go to Paris to be near him. You look severe, Peter, but what can I do, my dear, what can I do? He's ill, he's alone, unhappy, and who's to look after him, who's to keep him out of harm's way, to give him his medicine punctually? And why should I conceal it and say nothing about it? I love him, that's plain, I love him, I love him. . . . That love is a stone round my neck; I shall sink with it to the bottom, but I love that stone and can't live without it. [*Squeezes TROFIMOFF's hand.*] Don't think harshly of me, Peter, don't say anything to me, don't say . . .

TROFIMOFF [*weeping*]. For God's sake forgive my speaking candidly, but that man has robbed you!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. No, no, you should not say that! [*Stops her ears.*]

TROFIMOFF. But he's a scoundrel, you alone don't know it! He's a petty thief, a nobody. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*angry, but restrained*]. You're twenty-six or twenty-seven, and still a school-boy of the second grade!

TROFIMOFF. Why not?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. You should be a man, at your age you should be able to understand those who love. And you should be in love yourself, you must fall in love! [*Angry.*] Yes, yes! You aren't pure, you're just a freak, a queer fellow, a funny fungus.

TROFIMOFF [*in horror*]. What is she saying?

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. "I'm above love!" You're not above love, you're just what our Firce calls a bungler. Not to have a mistress at your age!

TROFIMOFF [*in horror*]. This is terrible! What is she saying? [*Goes quickly into the drawing-room, seizing his head with both his hands.*] It's awful . . . I can't stand it, I'll go away. [*Exit, but returns at once.*] All is over between us! [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*shouts after him*]. Peter, wait! Silly boy, I was joking! Peter! [*Somebody is heard going*

out and falling downstairs noisily. ANYA and VARYA scream; laughter is heard immediately.] What's that? [ANYA comes running in, laughing.]

ANYA. Peter's fallen downstairs! [Runs out again.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. This Peter's a funny creature!

[The Station-Master stands in the middle of the drawing-room and recites "The Magdalen" by Tolstoy. They listen to him, but he has delivered only a few lines when a waltz is heard from the front room, and the recitation is stopped. Everybody dances. TROFIMOFF, ANYA, VARYA, and LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA come in from the front room.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well, Peter . . . you pure soul . . . I beg your pardon. . . . Let's dance.

[She dances with PETER. ANYA and VARYA dance. FIRCE enters and leans his stick against a side door. YASHA has also come in and watches the dance.]

YASHA. Well, grandfather?

FIRCE. I'm not well. At our balls some time ago, generals and barons and admirals used to dance, and now we send for post-office clerks and the station-master, and even they come reluctantly. I'm very weak. The dead master, the grandfather, used to give everybody sealing-wax when anything was wrong. I've taken sealing-wax every day for twenty years, and more; possibly that's why I am still alive.

YASHA. I'm tired of you, grandfather. [Yawns.] If you'd only hurry up and kick the bucket.

FIRCE [muttering]. Oh you . . . bungler!

[TROFIMOFF and LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA dance in the reception-room, then into the sitting-room.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Merci. I'll sit down. [Sits.] I'm tired.

[Enter ANYA.]

ANYA [excited]. Somebody in the kitchen was saying just now that the cherry orchard was sold to-day.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Sold to whom?

ANYA. He didn't say to whom. He went away.

[Dances out into the reception-room with TROFIMOFF.]

YASHA. Some old man was chattering about it a long time ago. A stranger!

FIRCE. And Leonid Andreievitch isn't here yet, he hasn't come. He's wearing a light autumn overcoat. He'll catch cold. Oh, these young fellows.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll die of this. Go and find out, Yasha, to whom it's sold.

YASHA. Oh, but he's been gone a long time, the old man. *[Laughs.]*

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA *[slightly vexed]*. Why do you laugh? What are you so happy about?

YASHA. Yepikhodoff's too funny. He's a foolish man. Two-and-twenty troubles.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Firce, if the estate is sold, where will you go?

FIRCE. I'll go wherever you command me to go.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Why do you look like that? Are you ill? I think you should go to bed. . . .

FIRCE. Yes . . . *[With a smile.]* I'll go to bed, and who'll hand things round and give orders without me? I've the whole house on my shoulders.

YASHA *[to LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA]*. Liuboff Andreievna! I wish to ask a favor of you, if you'll be so kind! If you go to Paris again, take me along. I beg of you! It's absolutely impossible for me to remain here. *[Looking round; in an undertone.]* What's the good of talking about it? You see for yourself that this is an uncivilized country, with an immoral population, and it's so dull. The food in the kitchen is wretched, and here's this Firce walking about mumbling all kinds of inappropriate things. Take me with you. Please!

[Enter PISHCHIK.]

PISHCHIK. May I have the pleasure of a little waltz, dear lady . . . ? *[LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA goes to him.]* But all the same, you wonderful woman, I must have 180 little rubles from you. . . . I must. . . . *[They dance.]* 180 little rubles. . . . *[They go through into the drawing-room.]*

YASHA. *[sings softly]*.

*Oh, will you understand
My soul's deep restlessness?*

[*In the drawing-room a figure in a gray top-hat and in baggy check trousers is waving its hands; and there are cries of "Bravo, CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA!"*]

DUNYASHA [*stops to powder her face*]. The young mistress tells me to dance—there are lots of gentlemen, but few ladies—and my head whirls when I dance, and my heart beats, Firce Nikolaievitch; the Post-office clerk told me something just now that almost took my breath away.

[*The music grows faint.*]

FIRCE. What did he tell you?

DUNYASHA. He says, "You're like a little flower."

YASHA [*yawns*]. Impolite. . . . [*Exit.*]

DUNYASHA. Like a little flower. I'm such a delicate girl; I simply love tender words.

FIRCE. You'll lose your head.

[*Enter YEPIKHODOFF.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. You, Avdotya Fyodorovna, are about as anxious to see me as if I were some insect. [*Sighs.*] Oh, life!

DUNYASHA. What do you wish?

YEPIKHODOFF. Perhaps, doubtless, you may be right. [*Sighs.*] But, certainly, if you consider the matter in that light, then you, if I may say so, and you must excuse my candidness, have absolutely reduced me to the state of mind in which I find myself. I know my fate. Every day something unfortunate happens to me, and I've grown used to it a long time ago. I never look at my fate with a smile. You gave me your word, and though I. . . .

DUNYASHA. Please, we'll talk later on, but leave me alone now. I'm thinking now. [*Fans herself.*]

YEPIKHODOFF. Every day something unfortunate happens to me, and I, if I may so express myself, only smile, and even laugh.

[*VARYA enters from the drawing-room.*]

VARYA. Haven't you gone yet, Semyon? You really have no respect for anybody. [*To DUNYASHA.*] Go away.

Dunyasha. [*To YEPIKHODOFF.*] You play billiards and break a cue, and stroll about the drawing-room as if you were a visitor!

YEPIKHODOFF. You cannot, if I may say so, call me to order.

VARYA. I'm not calling you to order, I'm only telling you. You just walk about from place to place and never do your work. Goodness only knows why we keep a clerk.

YEPIKHODOFF [*offended*]. Whether I work, or walk about, or eat, or play billiards, is only a matter to be settled by people of understanding and my elders.

VARYA. You dare talk to me like that! [*Furious.*] You dare? You mean to insinuate that I know nothing? Go away! This minute!

YEPIKHODOFF [*nervous*]. I must ask you to express yourself more delicately.

VARYA [*beside herself*]. Get out this minute. Get out! [*He goes to the door, she follows.*] Two-and-twenty troubles! Not another sign of you here! I don't wish to set eyes on you again! [*YEPIKHODOFF has gone out; his voice can be heard outside: "I'll make a complaint against you."*] What, coming back? [*Snatches up the stick left by FIRCE near the door.*] Go . . . go . . . go. I'll show you . . . Are you going? Are you going? Well, then take that. [*She lashes out with the stick as LOPAKHIN enters.*]

LOPAKHIN. Much obliged.

VARYA [*angry but amused*]. I'm sorry.

LOPAKHIN. Never mind. I thank you for the pleasant reception you gave me!

VARYA. It isn't worthy of thanks. [*Walks away, then looks back and asks gently.*] I didn't hurt you, did I?

LOPAKHIN. No, not at all. There'll be a huge bump, no more.

VOICES FROM THE DRAWING-ROOM. Lopakhin's returned! Yermolai Alexeievitch!

PISHCHIK. Now we'll see what there is to see and hear what there is to hear. . . . [*Kisses LOPAKHIN.*] You smell

of brandy, my dashing soul. And we're all enjoying ourselves.

[Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is that you, Yermolai Alexeievitch? Why were you so long? Where's Leonid?

LOPAKHIN. Leonid Andreievitch returned with me, he's coming. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*excited*]. Well, what? Is it sold? Tell me?

LOPAKHIN [*confused, afraid to show his pleasure*]. The sale was over at four o'clock. . . . We missed the train, and had to wait till half-past nine. [*Sighs heavily*.] Ooh! My head's swimming a little.

[Enter GAIEFF; in his right hand he carries things that he has bought, with his left he dries his eyes.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Leon, what's happened? Leon, well? [*Impatiently, in tears*.] Quick, for the love of God. . . .

GAIEFF [*says nothing to her, only waves his hand; to FIRCE, weeping*]. Here, take this . . . Here are anchovies, herrings from Kertch. . . . I've had no food to-day. . . . I have had a time! [*The door from the billiard-room is open; the clicking of the balls is heard, and YASHA'S voice, "Seven, eighteen!" GAIEFF'S expression changes, he no longer cries*.] I'm awfully tired. Let me change my clothes, Firce. [*Goes out through the drawing-room; FIRCE following him*.]

PISHCHIK. What happened? Come on, tell us!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Is the cherry orchard sold?

LOPAKHIN. It is sold.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Who bought it?

LOPAKHIN. I bought it. [*Pause*.]

[LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA is overwhelmed; she would fall if she were not leaning against an armchair and a table. VARYA takes her keys off her belt, throws them on the floor into the middle of the room and goes out.] I bought it! Wait, ladies and gentlemen, please, my head's going round, I can't talk. . . . [*Laughing*.] When we reached the sale, Deriganoff was there already. Leonid Andreievitch had only fifteen thousand rubles, and Deriganoff offered thirty thousand on

top of the mortgage to begin with. I saw how matters stood, so I went right after him and bid forty. He raised his bid to forty-five, I offered fifty-five. That means he went up by fives and I went up by tens. . . . Well, it came to an end at last, I bid ninety more than the mortgage; and it stayed with me. The cherry orchard is mine now, mine! [*Roars with laughter.*] My God, my God, the cherry orchard's mine! Tell me I'm drunk, or crazy, or dreaming. . . . [*Stamps his feet.*] Don't laugh at me! If my father and grandfather rose from their graves and looked at the whole affair, and saw how their Yermolai, their whipped and illiterate Yermolai, who used to run barefoot in the winter, how that very Yermolai has bought an estate, the most beautiful spot in the world! I've bought the estate where my grandfather and my father were slaves, where they weren't even allowed to enter the kitchen. I'm asleep, it's only a dream, an illusion. . . . It's the fruit of imagination, wrapped in the fog of the unknown. . . . [*Picks up the keys, gayly smiling.*] She threw down the keys, she wished to show that she was no longer mistress here. . . . [*Jingles keys.*] Well, it's all one! [*Hears the band tuning up.*] Eh, musicians, play, I wish to hear you! Come and look at Yermolai Lopakhin swinging his ax against the cherry orchard, come and look at the trees falling! We'll build villas here, and our grandsons and great-grandsons will see a new life here. . . . Play on, music [*The band plays.* LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA sinks into a chair and weeps bitterly. LOPAKHIN continues reproachfully.] Why then, why didn't you take my advice? My poor, dear woman, you can't go back now. [*Weeps.*] Oh, if only the whole thing were finished, if only our uneven, unhappy lives were changed!

PISHCHIK [*takes his arm; in an undertone*]. She's crying. Let's go into the drawing-room and leave her by herself . . . come on . . . [*Takes his arm and leads him out.*]

LOPAKHIN. What's that? Bandsmen, play up! Go on, do just as I wish you to! [*Ironically.*] The new owner, the owner of the cherry orchard is coming! [*He accidentally knocks up against a little table and nearly upsets the can-*

delabra.] I can pay for everything now! [Exit with PISHCHIK.]

[In the reception-room and the drawing-room nobody remains except LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, who sits huddled up and weeping bitterly. The band plays softly. ANYA and TROFIMOFF come in quickly. ANYA goes up to her mother and kneels in front of her. TROFIMOFF stands at the drawing-room entrance.]

ANYA. Mother! Mother, are you crying? My dear, kind, good mother, my beautiful mother, I love you! Bless you! The cherry orchard is sold. We own it no longer, it's true. But don't cry, mother, you still have your life before you, you've still your beautiful pure soul. . . . Come with me, come, dear, away from here, come! We'll plant a new orchard more beautiful than this, and you'll see it, and you'll understand, and deep soothing joy will enfold your soul, like the evening sun, and you'll smile, mother! Come, dear, let's go!

ACT IV

Same as Act I. There are no curtains on the windows, no pictures; only a few pieces of furniture are left piled up in a corner as if for sale. The emptiness is apparent. There are bags and suitcases by the door that leads out of the house and at the back of the stage.

[The door at the left is open; the voices of VARYA and ANYA can be heard through it. LOPAKHIN stands and waits. YASHA holds a tray with little glasses of champagne. Outside, YEPIKHODOFF is tying up a box. Voices are heard behind the stage. The peasants have come to say good-bye. The voice of GAIEFF is heard; "Thank you, brothers, thank you."]

YASHA. The peasants have come to say good-bye. I am of the opinion, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that they're good people, but they don't understand very much.

[The voices die away. LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA and GAIEFF enter. She is not crying but is pale, and her face twitches; she can hardly speak.]

GAIEFF. You gave them your purse, Liuba. You can't go on like that, you can't!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I couldn't help myself, I couldn't!
[*They go out.*]

LOPAKHIN [*in the doorway, looking after them*]. Please, I ask you most humbly! Just a little glass for farewell. I didn't remember to bring any from town and I found only one bottle at the station. Please, do! [*Pause.*] Won't you really have any? [*Goes away from the door.*] If I only knew — I wouldn't have bought any. Well, I shan't drink any, either. [*YASHA carefully puts the tray on a chair.*] You have a drink, Yasha, at any rate.

YASHA. To those departing! And good luck to those who stay behind! [*Drinks.*] I can assure you that this isn't real champagne.

LOPAKHIN. Eight rubles a bottle. [*Pause.*] It's frightfully cold here.

YASHA. We made no fire to-day, since we're going away.
[*Laughs.*]

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with you?

YASHA. I'm happy — that's all!

LOPAKHIN. It's October, but it's as sunny and quiet as if it were summer. Good for building. [*Looking at his watch and speaking through the door.*] Ladies and gentlemen, please remember that it's only forty-seven minutes till train time! You must leave for the station in twenty minutes. Hurry up.

[*TROFIMOFF, in an overcoat, enters from the outside.*]

TROFIMOFF. I think it's time we went. The carriages are waiting. Where the devil are my rubbers? They're lost. [*Through the door.*] Anya, I can't find my rubbers! I can't!

LOPAKHIN. I have to go to Kharkoff. I'm going on the same train as you. I'm going to spend the whole winter in Kharkoff. I've been hanging around with you people. I am tired of doing nothing. I must have something to do with my hands; they seem to belong to a different person if I don't use them.

TROFIMOFF. We'll go away now and then you'll start again on your useful occupations!

LOPAKHIN. Have a glass?

TROFIMOFF. No — thanks!

LOPAKHIN. So you're off to Moscow now?

TROFIMOFF. Yes. I'll see them into town and to-morrow I'm going to Moscow.

LOPAKHIN. Yes . . . I suppose the professors aren't lecturing yet; they're waiting till you turn up!

TROFIMOFF. That does not concern you.

LOPAKHIN. How many years have you been going to the university?

TROFIMOFF. Think of something new! This is old and trite! [*Looking for his rubbers.*] You know, we may not meet again, so just let me give you a parting bit of advice: Don't wave your hands about! Get rid of that habit of waving them about. And then, building villas and reckoning on their residents becoming freeholders in time — that's the same thing; it's all a matter of waving your hands . . . I like you in spite of everything . . . You've slender, delicate fingers, like those of an artist, and you've a gentle, refined soul. . . .

LOPAKHIN [*embraces him*]. Good-bye, dear fellow. Thanks for all you've said. If you need money for the journey, let me give you some.

TROFIMOFF. What for? I don't need any.

LOPAKHIN. But you've nothing!

TROFIMOFF. Yes, I have, thank you; I received some for a translation. Here it is in my pocket. [*Nervously.*] But I can't find my rubbers!

VARYA [*from the other room*]. Take your rubbish away! [*Throws a pair of rubbers on stage.*]

TROFIMOFF. Why are you angry, Varya? H'm! These aren't my rubbers!

LOPAKHIN. In the spring I sowed three thousand acres of poppies, and now I've netted forty thousand rubles profit. Why turn up your nose at it? I'm just a simple peasant. . . . And when my poppies were in bloom, what a picture it was! So, as I was saying, I made forty thousand rubles, and I mean I'd like to lend you some, because I can afford it.

TROFIMOFF. Your father was a peasant, mine was a drug-gist, and that means nothing at all. [LOPAKHIN *takes out his pocketbook*.] No, no . . . Even if you gave me twenty thousand I should refuse. I'm a free man. And everything that rich and poor alike value so highly carries no more weight with me than thistledown in a wind. I can do without you, I can pass you by. I'm strong and proud. Mankind goes on to the highest possible truths and happiness on earth, and I march in the front ranks!

LOPAKHIN. Will you reach there?

TROFIMOFF. I shall! [*Pause*.] I'll reach there and show the way to others. [*Axes cutting the trees are heard in the distance*.]

LOPAKHIN. Well, good-bye, old man. It's time to go. Here we stand pulling one another's noses, but life goes its own way all the while. When I work for a long stretch tirelessly, my thoughts become clearer and it seems to me that I understand the reasons for existence. But think, brother, how many people live in Russia without knowing why — ? But all this is beside the point. Leonid Andreievitch, they say, has accepted a post in a bank; he will get six thousand rubles a year . . . But he won't stand it; he's very lazy.

ANYA [*at the door*]. Mother asks if you will stop them cutting down the orchard until she has gone away.

TROFIMOFF. Yes, really, you ought to have enough tact not to do that. [*Exit*.]

LOPAKHIN. All right, all right . . . What funny people! [*Exit*.]

ANYA. Has Firce been sent to the hospital?

YASHA. I gave the order this morning. I suppose they've sent him.

ANYA [*to YEPIKHODOFF, who crosses the room*]. Semyon Panteleievitch, please make inquiries if Firce has been sent to the hospital.

YASHA [*offended*]. I told Yegor this morning. What's the use of asking ten times?

YEPIKHODOFF. That old Firce, in my conclusive opinion, isn't worth mending; he had better join his ancestors. I only

envy him. [*Puts a trunk on a hat-box and squashes it.*]
Well, of course. I thought so! [*Exit.*]

YASHA [*grinning*]. Two-and-twenty troubles.

VARYA [*behind the door*]. Has Firce been taken away to the hospital?

ANYA. Yes.

VARYA. Why didn't they take the letter to the doctor?

ANYA. It'll have to be sent after him. [*Exit.*]

VARYA [*in the next room*]. Where's Yasha? Tell him his mother has come and wishes to say good-bye to him.

YASHA [*waving his hand*]. She'll make me lose all patience!

[DUNYASHA meanwhile has been busying herself with the bags; now that YASHA is left alone, she goes to him.]

DUNYASHA. If you would only look at me once, Yasha. You're going away, leaving me behind . . . [*Weeps and hugs him.*]

YASHA. What's the use of crying? [*Drinks champagne.*]
In six days I'll be back again in Paris. To-morrow we get into the express and off we go. I can hardly believe it. Vive la France! It doesn't suit me here, I can't live here . . . it's no good. Well, I've seen the uncivilized world; I have had enough of it. [*Drinks champagne.*] What are you crying for? Behave decently and then you'll have no cause for tears!

DUNYASHA [*powders herself, looking in the mirror*]. Write me from Paris! I loved you so much, Yasha, so much! I am a delicate girl, Yasha.

YASHA. Somebody's coming.

[*He bustles around the baggage, singing softly. Enter LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA, GAIEFF, ANYA, and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA.*]

GAIEFF. We'd better be off. There's no time to lose. [*Looks at YASHA.*] Somebody smells of herring!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We needn't get into our carriages for ten minutes. [*Looks round the room.*] Good-bye, dear house, old grandfather. The winter will pass, the spring will come, and then you'll be here no more. You'll be pulled

down. How much these walls have seen! [*Passionately kisses her daughter.*] My treasure, you're radiant, your eyes flash like two jewels! Are you happy? Very?

ANYA. Very! A new life is beginning, mother!

GAIEFF [*gayly*]. Yes, really, everything's all right now. Before the cherry orchard was sold we all were excited and worried, and then, when the question was solved once and for all, we all calmed down, and even became cheerful. I'm a bank official now, and a financier . . . red in the center; and you Liuba, look better for some reason or other, there's no doubt about it.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Yes. My nerves are better, it's true. [*She puts on her coat and hat.*] I sleep well. Take my baggage out, Yasha. It's time. [*To ANYA.*] My little girl, we'll soon see each other again . . . I'm off to Paris. I'll live there on the money your grandmother from Yaroslavl sent to buy the estate—bless her!—though it won't last long.

ANYA. You'll come back soon, soon, mother, won't you? I'll get ready, and pass the examination at the High School, and then I'll work and help you. We'll read all sorts of books together, won't we? [*Kisses her mother's hands.*] We'll read in the autumn evenings; we'll read many books, and a beautiful new world will open up before us . . . [*Thoughtfully.*] You'll come, mother. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll come, my darling. [*Embraces her.*]

[*Enter LOPAKHIN. CHARLOTTA is singing to herself.*]

GAIEFF. Charlotta is happy; she's singing!

CHARLOTTA [*takes a bundle, looking like a wrapped-up baby*]. My little baby, bye-bye. [*The baby seems to answer, "Oua, oua!"*] Hush, my nice little boy. [*"Oua! Oua!"*] I'm so sorry for you! [*Throws the bundle back.*] So please find me a new place. I can't go on like this.

LOPAKHIN. We'll find one, Charlotta Ivanovna, don't you be afraid.

GAIEFF. Everybody's leaving us. Varya's going away . . . we've suddenly become unnecessary.

CHARLOTTA. I've nowhere to live in town. I must go away.
[Hums.] Never mind.

[Enter PISHCHIK.]

LOPAKHIN. The miracle of nature!

PISHCHIK [puffing]. Oh, let me get my breath again. I'm fagged . . . My honorable friends, give me some water . . .

GAIEFF. Come for money did you? I'm your humble servant, and I'm going out of the way of temptation. [Exit.]

PISHCHIK. I haven't been here for ever so long . . . dear madam. [To LOPAKHIN.] You here? Glad to see you . . . man of tremendous brain . . . take this . . . take it . . . [Gives LOPAKHIN money.] Four hundred rubles . . . that leaves 841 —

LOPAKHIN [shrugs his shoulders in surprise]. It's like a dream. Where did you get this?

PISHCHIK. Stop . . . it's hot . . . A most unexpected thing happened. A group of Englishmen came along and found some white clay on my land. . . . [To LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA.] And here's four hundred for you . . . beautiful lady . . . [Gives her money.] Give you the rest later . . . [Drinks water.] Just now a young man in the train was saying that some great philosopher advises us all to jump from the roofs. "Jump!" he says, and that's all. [Astonished.] Just imagine! More water!

LOPAKHIN. Who were these Englishmen?

PISHCHIK. I've leased the land with the clay to them for twenty-four years . . . Now, excuse me, I've no time. I must hurry or — I'll go to Gnoikoff — to Kardamanoff — I owe everybody — [Drinks.] Good-bye — I'll drop in Thursday.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We're just starting off to town, and to-morrow I go abroad.

PISHCHIK [agitated]. What? Why to town? I see furniture . . . trunks . . . Well, never mind. [Crying.] Never mind. These Englishmen are men of tremendous intellect . . . Never mind . . . Be happy . . . God will help you . . . Never mind . . . Everything in this world comes to an end . . . [Kisses LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA's hand.] And if you should

happen to hear that my end has come, just remember this old . . . horse and say: "There used to be a certain fellow called Semyonoff-Pishchik, God bless his soul. . . ." Wonderful weather . . . yes . . . [*Exit deeply moved, but returns at once and says in the door.*] Dashenka sent her love! [*Exit.*]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Now we can go. I've two worries, though. The first is poor Firce. [*Looks at her watch.*] We've still five minutes . . .

ANYA. Mother, Firce has already been sent to the hospital. Yasha sent him off this morning.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. The second is Varya. She's used to getting up early and to work, and now she has no work to do, she's like a fish out of water. She's grown thin and pale, and she cries, poor thing. . . . [*Pause.*] You know very well, Yermolai Alexeievitch, that I hoped formerly to marry her to you, and I suppose you are going to marry somebody? [*Whispers to ANYA, who nods to CHARLOTTA, and they both go out.*] She loves you, she's your sort, and I don't understand, I really don't, why you seem to be keeping away from each other. I don't understand!

LOPAKHIN. To tell the truth, I don't understand it myself. It's all so strange. . . . If there's still time, I'll be ready at once. Let's get it over, once and for all; I don't feel as if I could ever propose to her without you.

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Excellent. It'll take only a minute. I'll call her.

LOPAKHIN. The champagne comes in very handy. [*Looking at the glass.*] They're empty, somebody's drunk them already. [*YASHA coughs.*] I call that licking it up. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*animated*]. Excellent. We'll go out. Yasha, *allez*. I'll call her . . . [*At the door.*] Varya, leave that and come here. Come! [*Exit with YASHA.*]

LOPAKHIN [*looks at his watch*]. Yes . . . [*Pause.*]
[*There is a restrained laugh behind the door, a whisper, then VARYA comes in. She examines the luggage at length.*]

VARYA. I can't seem to find it . . .

LOPAKHIN. What are you looking for?

VARYA. I packed it myself and I don't remember. [*Pause.*]

LOPAKHIN. Where are you going now, Varvara Mikhailovna?

VARYA. I? To the Ragulins . . . I've accepted a position, to look after their household . . . housekeeper or something.

LOPAKHIN. Is that at Yashnevo? It's about fifty miles. [*Pause.*] So life in this house is finished now. . . .

VARYA [*looking at the baggage*]. Where is it? . . . perhaps I've put it away in the trunk . . . Yes, there'll be no more life in this house . . .

LOPAKHIN. And I'm off to Kharkoff at once . . . by this train. I've a lot of business on hand. I'm leaving Yepikhodoff here . . . I've hired him.

VARYA. Well, well!

LOPAKHIN. Last year at this time the snow was already falling, if you remember, and now it's nice and sunny. Only it's rather cold . . . There's three degrees of frost.

VARYA. I didn't look. [*Pause.*] And our thermometer's broken. . . . [*Pause.*]

VOICE AT THE DOOR. Yermolai Alexeievitch!

LOPAKHIN [*as if he has long been waiting to be called*]. Just a minute.

[*Exit quickly.* VARYA, sitting on the floor, puts her face against a bundle of clothes and weeps gently. The door opens. LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA enters carefully.]

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Well? [*Pause.*] We must go.

VARYA [*not crying now, wipes her eyes*]. Yes, it's quite time, dear mother. I'll get to the Ragulins to-day, if I don't miss the train. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA [*at the door*]. Anya, put on your things.

[*Enter ANYA, then GAIEFF, and CHARLOTTA IVANOVNA. GAIEFF wears a warm overcoat with a cape. A servant and drivers come in. YEPIKHODOFF bustles around the baggage.*] Now we can go away.

ANYA [*joyfully*]. Away!

GAIEFF. My friends, my dear friends! Can I be silent, in leaving this house forever? — can I restrain myself, in saying

farewell, from expressing those feelings which now fill all my soul?

ANYA [*imploringly*]. Uncle!

VARYA. Uncle, you shouldn't!

GAIEFF [*stupidly*]. Double the red into the center . . . I'll be quiet.

[*Enter TROFIMOFF, then LOPAKHIN.*]

TROFIMOFF. Well, it's time to go!

LOPAKHIN. Yepikhodoff, my coat!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. I'll sit here one minute more. It's as if I'd never really noticed what the walls and ceilings of this house were like, and now I look at them greedily, with such tender love. . . .

GAIEFF. I remember, when I was six years old, on Trinity Sunday, I sat at this window and looked and watched my father go to church. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Have all the things been taken away?

LOPAKHIN. Yes, all, I think. [*To YEPIKHODOFF, putting on his coat.*] You see that everything's quite straight, Yepikhodoff.

YEPIKHODOFF [*hoarsely*]. You may depend upon me, Yermolai Alexeievitch!

LOPAKHIN. What's the matter with your voice?

YEPIKHODOFF. I swallowed something just now; I was taking a drink of water.

YASHA [*suspiciously*]. What manners . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We go away, and not a soul remains behind.

LOPAKHIN. Till the spring.

VARYA [*drags an umbrella out of a bundle, and seems to be waving it about. LOPAKHIN appears to be frightened.*] What are you doing? . . . I never thought . . .

TROFIMOFF. Come along, let's take our seats . . . it's time! The train will be in presently.

VARYA. Peter, here they are, your rubbers, by that trunk. [*In tears.*] And how old and dirty they are . . .

TROFIMOFF [*putting them on*]. Come on!

GAIEFF [*deeply moved, nearly crying*]. The train . . . the station . . . Cross in the center, a white double in the corner. . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. Let's go!

LOPAKHIN. Are you all here? There's nobody else? [*Locks the side-door on the left.*] There's a lot of things in there. I must lock them up. Come!

ANYA. Good-bye, home! Good-bye, old life!

TROFIMOFF. Welcome, new life.

[*Exit with ANYA. VARYA looks round the room and goes out slowly. YASHA and CHARLOTTA, with her little dog, go out.*]

LOPAKHIN. Till the spring then! Come on . . . till we meet again! [*Exit.*]

[*LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA and GAIEFF are left alone. They seem to have been waiting for this moment. They fall into each other's arms and sob restrainedly and quietly, fearing that somebody might hear them.*]

GAIEFF [*in despair*]. My sister, my sister . . .

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. My dear, my gentle, beautiful orchard! My life, my youth, my happiness, good-bye! Good-bye!

ANYA'S VOICE [*gayly*]. Mother!

TROFIMOFF'S VOICE [*gayly, excited*]. Coo-ee!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. To look at the walls and the windows for the last time . . . My late mother used to like to walk about this room . . .

GAIEFF. My sister, my sister!

ANYA'S VOICE. Mother!

TROFIMOFF'S VOICE [*gayly, excited*]. Coo-ee!

LIUBOFF ANDREIEVNA. We're coming!

[*They go out. The stage is empty. The sound of keys turned in the locks is heard, and then the noise of the carriages driving off. It is quiet. Then the sound of an ax against the trees is heard in the silence sadly and staccato. Footsteps are heard. FIRCE comes in from the door on the right. He is dressed as usual, in a short jacket and white vest,*

with slippers on his feet. He is ill. He goes to the door and tries the handle.]

FIRCE. It's locked. They've left. [*Sits on sofa.*] They've forgotten me. . . . Never mind, I'll sit here . . . And Leonid Andreievitch has probably gone in a light overcoat instead of putting on his fur coat . . . [*Sighs anxiously.*] I didn't see. . . . Oh, these young people! [*Mumbles something unintelligible.*] Life's gone on as if I'd never lived. [*Lying down.*] I'll lie down. . . . You've no strength left in you, nothing left at all. . . . Oh, you . . . bungler!

[*He lies motionless. The distant sound is heard, as if from the sky, of a string breaking, dying away morosely. Silence follows it, and only the sound somewhere in the distance, of the ax falling on the trees, is audible.*]

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

Dramatized by Albert Smith.

(1859)

CHARACTERS

JOHN PERRYBINGLE, *a carrier.*

MR. TACKLETON, *a toy maker.*

CALEB PLUMMER, *his man.*

OLD GENTLEMAN.

PORTER.

DOT.

BERTHA, *a blind girl.*

MRS. FIELDING.

MAY FIELDING.

TILLY SLOWBOY.

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH

CHIRP THE FIRST.

SCENE.—*The interior of JOHN PERRYBINGLE'S cottage. A fire alight in the grate, on which is the kettle. Table and tea-things. Chairs by the fire. Cradle. Door left. Window with curtain furniture.*

[*At the rising of the curtain TILLY SLOWBOY is sitting down on a low stool, nursing the baby. DOT is busy about.*]

DOT. There! there's the ham—and there's the tea—and there's the bread! Now all is comfortable against John comes home. Dear me! if it had been for anybody else, how tired I should have been! and cross, too! I'm sure there was enough to make me so. First, when I went to fill the kettle, I lost my pattens, and splashed my legs—that's hard to bear when one rather plumes oneself upon one's legs, and keeps oneself particularly neat in point of stockings. . . . [*The chirp of the CRICKET is heard.*] Ah! there's the cricket on the hearth again. I thought it wouldn't be quiet long when the kettle began to sing. . . .

[*She takes the baby from TILLY, and going to the door, opens it. Part of the cart is seen, with a lantern—JOHN comes in, stamping with cold—snow on him—he shakes his hat.*]

Oh! goodness, John, what a state you're in, with the weather.

[*Assists him to undress.*]

JOHN. Why, you see, Dot, it—it ain't exactly summer weather, so no wonder. [*Puts down parcels.*]

DOT. I wish you wouldn't call me Dot, John—I don't like it.

JOHN [*drawing her to him*]. Why, little woman, what else are you? A dot, and—[*Looks at baby.*—a dot, and

carry—no, I won't make a joke, I should only spoil it; I don't know that I ever was nearer one though!

DOT. You don't notice baby, John—ain't he beautiful? Now don't he look precious in his sleep?

JOHN. Very! He generally is asleep—ain't he?

DOT. Lor! John!—good gracious—no!

JOHN. Oh! I thought his eyes were generally shut. Holloa! [*Shouts in baby's ear.*]

DOT. Goodness, John! how you startle one!

JOHN. It ain't right for him to turn 'em up, in that way, is it? See how he's winking with 'em both at once! And look at his mouth! Why, he's gasping like a gold and silver fish!

DOT [*with dignity*]. You don't deserve to be a father—you don't; but how should you know what little complaints babies are troubled with, John?

JOHN. No—it's very true, Dot. I don't know much about it—I only know the wind's been blowing northeast, straight into the cart, the whole way home.

[*Begins to take off his coat.*]

DOT. Poor old man! so it has. . . . Here, Tilly, take baby—and don't let him fall under the grate, whatever you do! [*At table.*] There! there's the tea-pot ready on the hob—and the cold knuckle of ham—and the crusty loaf—and there's the cricket!

JOHN [*having hung up his coat*]. Heyday! it's merrier than ever, to-night, I think. [*Goes to table.*]

DOT. And it's sure to bring us good fortune, John!

JOHN. It always has. To have a cricket on the hearth is the luckiest thing in all the world!

DOT. [*Sits by his side and takes his hand.*] The first time I heard its cheerful note, John, was on that night you brought me to my new home here, . . . nearly a year ago. You recollect, John?

JOHN. I should think so, Dot.

DOT. Its chirp was such a welcome to me! . . . It seemed to say you would be kind and gentle with me, and would

not expect—I had a fear of that, John, then—to find an old head on the shoulders of your foolish little wife.

JOHN [*patting her*]. I was quite content to take them as they were.

DOT. It spoke the truth, John, when it seemed to say so—for you have ever been, I'm sure, the best, the most considerate, the most affectionate of husbands to me. This has been a happy home, John, and I love the cricket for its sake!

JOHN. Why, so do I then—so do I, Dot! . . .

[*Kisses her. She rises.*]

DOT. There are not many parcels to-night, John. [*Goes to those he has put down.*] Why, what's this round box? Heart alive, John, a wedding cake!

JOHN. Leave a woman alone to find out that! . . . Yes, I called for it at the pastry-cook's.

DOT [*reading*]. Why, John—good gracious, John! you never mean to say its Gruff and Tackleton, the toy maker's!

TILLY [*is dancing the baby*]. Was it Gruff's and Tackleton's the toy-maker's then? and would it call at pastry cooks, for wedding cakes—and did its mothers know the boxes, when its fathers brought them home. Ketcher! ketcher! ketcher!

DOT [*still looking at the parcel*]. And so, it's really come about! Why she and I were girls at school together, John—and he's as old—as unlike her. How many years older is Gruff and Tackleton, John?

JOHN [*at the table*]. How many more cups of tea shall I drink to-night in one sitting, than Gruff and Tackleton ever took in four. . . . Why, Dot—[*Raps with the knife on table.*] Dot!

[*DOT has remained plunged in thought since she last spoke. She starts at the noise.*]

DOT. Lor bless me, John! I beg your pardon, I was thinking. Ah! so, these are all the parcels, are they, John?

JOHN. That's all—why—no—I—[*Lays down knife and fork.*]—I declare—I've clean forgotten the old gentleman!

DOT. The old gentleman?

JOHN. In the cart. He was asleep amongst the straw the last time I saw him. I've very nearly remembered him twice since I came in. . . . Halloo! yahip there!—[*Goes out of the door.*] rouse up there!—that's my hearty!

[*TILLY looks alarmed, as she hears the words "the old gentleman," and crossing to DOT runs against the STRANGER, with baby's head, as he enters, introduced by JOHN. The STRANGER removes his hat, and remains bare-headed, in the center of the room.*]

JOHN. You are such an undeniable good sleeper, sir, that I had a mind to ask you where the other six are, only that would be a joke and I know I should spoil it. Ha, ha! very near, though, very near!

[*The STRANGER looks round him, and bows to JOHN and DOT, gravely—then striking a club he carries, it falls asunder, and forms a species of camp-stool—he sits down on it.*]

JOHN. There! that's the way I found him, sitting by the road-side. Upright as a millstone, and almost as deaf.

DOT. Sitting in the open air, John?

JOHN. In the open air, just at dusk. "Carriage paid," he said! and gave me eighteen pence. Then he got in; and there he is!

STRANGER. If you please, I was to be left till called for. Don't mind me.

[*He puts on a pair of large spectacles, takes a book from his pocket, and begins to read. JOHN and DOT look at him with astonishment. To JOHN, nodding his head towards DOT.*]

Your daughter, my good friend?

JOHN. Wife!

STRANGER. Niece?

JOHN [*loud*]. Wife!

STRANGER. Indeed: surely—very young! [*Reads for an instant, then resumes.*] Baby yours? [*JOHN and DOT nod eagerly.*] Girl?

JOHN [*bawling*]. B—o—y!

STRANGER. Also very young—eh!

DOT [*bawls in STRANGER'S ear*]. Two months and three days!—vaccinated just six weeks ago! Took very finely—considered, by the doctor, a remarkably fine child—equal to the general run of children at five months old—takes notice in a way quite wonderful—may seem impossible to you, but feels his legs already! [*A knocking at the door.*]

JOHN. Hark! he's called for, sure enough! There's somebody at the door—open it, Tilly.

[*TILLY goes to the door, opens it, and lets in CALEB PLUMMER, in his sackcloth coat.*]

CALEB. Good evening, John! good evening, mum! good evening, Tilly—good evening, unbeknown! How's baby, mum? Boxer's pretty well, I hope?

DOT. All thriving, Caleb! I am sure you need only to look at the dear child, for one to know that.

CALEB. And I'm sure I need only look at you, for another—or at John, for another—or at Tilly, as far as that goes.

JOHN. Busy just now, Caleb?

CALEB. Why, pretty well, John—this is a good time of year for the toy business. There's rather a run on Noah's arks, just at present. I wish I could improve Noah's family—but I don't see how it's to be done at the price. It would be satisfaction to one's mind to make it clearer, which was Shems and Hams, and which was wives. Flies ain't on that scale neither, as compared with the elephant, you know. Ah, well! Have you got anything in the parcel line for me, John?

[*JOHN searches his coat pocket, and brings out a little plant in a flower-pot, packed up.*]

JOHN. There it is! Not so much as a leaf damaged—full of buds! It was very dear, though, Caleb, at this season.

CALEB. Never mind that: it would be cheap to me whatever it cost. Anything else, John?

JOHN. A small box—here you are! [*Gives box.*]

CALEB [*spelling*]. "For Caleb Plummer, with cash." With cash, John? I don't think it's for me.

JOHN. With care. Where do you make out "cash?"

CALEB. Oh! to be sure. It's all right—"With care?" Yes, yes, that's mine. Ah! if my dear boy in the golden South Americas had lived, John, it might have been cash indeed! You loved him like a son, didn't you? You needn't say you did—I know, of course. [*Reads.*] "Caleb Plummer, with care." Yes, yes; for my poor blind daughter's work—it's a box of dolls' eyes. I wish it was her own sight in a box, John.

JOHN. I wish it was, or could be.

CALEB. Thank'ee, you speak very hearty. To think she should never see the dolls, and them a-staring at her bold all day long. That's where it cuts. What's the damage, John?

JOHN. I'll damage you, if you inquire. Dot, nearly a joke; very near, wasn't it? Stop, Caleb—here's something for your governor, old Gruff and Tackleton.

CALEB. He hasn't been here, has he?

JOHN. Not he, he's too busy, courting.

CALEB. He's coming round though—he told me so. He isn't a pleasant man, is he, John, though he does sell toys? 'Pon my honor, I think he only likes to sell those that make children uncomfortable. He makes all the grim faces to the brown paper farmers who drive the pigs. And if you knew how he reveled in those hideous, hairy, red-eyed jacks-in-boxes. Oh! he loves them. I think I'd better go. By the bye, you couldn't have the goodness to let me pinch Boxer's tail, mum, for half a moment, could you?

DOT. Why, Caleb, what a question.

CALEB. Oh! Never mind, mum; he mightn't like it, perhaps. There's a small order just come in for barking dogs, and I should wish to go as close to nature as I could for sixpence. That's all, never mind, mum; good-bye!

[*He puts the box on his shoulder, and is going out, when he is met by TACKLETON on the threshold.*]

TACKLETON [*entering*]. Oh! here you are, are you? Wait a bit; I'll take you home. John Perrybingle, my service to you; more of my service to your pretty wife. Handsomer

every day! Better, too, if possible. [*Aside.*] And younger, there's the devil of it.

DOT. I should be astonished at your paying compliments, Mr. Tackleton, but for your condition.

TACKLETON. Oh! You know all about it then?

DOT. I have got myself to believe it somehow.

TACKLETON. After a very hard struggle, I suppose.

DOT. Very.

TACKLETON. In three days' time; next Thursday, that's to be my wedding day.

JOHN. Why, it's our wedding-day, too.

TACKLETON. Ha! ha! Odd! You're just such another couple, just!

DOT [*half aside*]. What next? He'll say just another such baby, perhaps. The man's mad.

TACKLETON [*to JOHN*]. I say, a word with you. You'll come to the wedding—we're in the same boat, you know.

JOHN. How, in the same boat?

TACKLETON [*nudging him*]. A little disparity, you know. Come and spend an evening with us, beforehand.

JOHN. Why?

TACKLETON. Why? That's a new way of receiving an invitation! Why, for pleasure, sociability, you know, and all that.

JOHN. I thought you were never sociable.

TACKLETON. Tchah! It's of no use to be anything but free with you, I see. Why, then, the truth is, you have a—what the tea-drinking people call a—a sort of comfortable appearance together, you and your wife. We know better, you know better, but—

JOHN. No, we *don't* know better. What are you talking about?

TACKLETON. Well, we *don't* know better, then; as you like; what does it matter? I was going to say, as you have a sort of an appearance, your company will produce a favorable effect on Mrs. Tackleton that will be.

JOHN. We've made a promise to ourselves, these six months to keep our wedding-day at home. . . .

TACKLETON. Bah! What's home? [*Cricket is heard.*] Four walls and a ceiling! Why don't you kill that cricket? I would; I always do! I hate their noise.

JOHN. You kill your crickets, eh?

TACKLETON. Scrunch 'em, sir. You'll say you'll come; because, you know, whatever one woman says, another woman is determined to clinch always. There's that spirit of emulation among 'em, sir, that if your wife says to my wife, "I'm the happiest woman in the world, and mine's the best husband in the world, and I dote on him!"—my wife will say the same to yours, or more; and *half believe it*.

JOHN. Do you mean to say she don't, then?

TACKLETON. Don't! Ha! ha!—don't what?

JOHN. Pshaw! That she don't believe it!

TACKLETON. You're joking. I have the humor, sir, to marry a young wife, and a pretty wife—I am able to gratify that humor, and I do—it's my whim. But now, look there! [*Points to Dor, who is sitting at the fire.*] She honors and obeys, no doubt, you know; and that, as I am not a man of sentiment, is quite enough for me. But do you think there's anything more in it?

JOHN. I think I should chuck any man out of window who said there wasn't.

TACKLETON. Exactly so. We're exactly alike in reality, I see. Good night! You won't give us to-morrow evening. Well, next day you go visiting, I know. I'll meet you there, and bring my wife that is to be. It'll do you good. Good night!

[*As he is going, DOR gives a shriek and starts up from her seat. Stands staring at the STRANGER.*]

JOHN. Dot! Mary darling! What's the matter? Are you ill? [*He supports her.*] What is it? Tell me, dear.
[*The STRANGER rises.*]

DOR. Nothing, John! . . . A kind of shock—something came suddenly before my eyes—I don't know what it was—it's quite gone—quite gone!

TACKLETON. I'm glad it's gone!—I wonder where it's gone,

and what it was? Humph! Caleb, come here—who's that, with the gray hair? *[Points to STRANGER.]*

CALEB. I don't know, sir. Never see him before, in all my life. A beautiful figure for a nutcracker—quite a new model—with a screw jaw opening down into his waistcoat, he'd be lovely!

TACKLETON. Not ugly enough!

CALEB. Or for a firebox, either—what a model! Unscrew his head, to put the matches in—turn him heels upwards, for a light—and what a firebox for a gentleman's mantle piece, just as he stands!

TACKLETON. Not half ugly enough! Come, bring that box. *[To DOT.]* All right now, I hope!

DOT *[hurriedly]*. Oh! quite gone—quite gone!—Good night!

TACKLETON. Good night!—Good night, John Perrybingle!

JOHN. Stop! This good gentleman may be glad of company.

STRANGER *[rises, and advances towards JOHN]*. I beg your pardon, friend—the more so, as I fear your wife has not been well. But the attendant whom my infirmity *[points to his ears]* renders almost indispensable, not having arrived, I fear there must be some mistake. The bad night is still as bad as ever. Would you, in your kindness, suffer me to rent a bed here?

DOT *[eagerly]*. Yes, yes, certainly.

JOHN. Oh, well! I don't object; but still, I'm not quite sure that——

DOT. Hush, John!

TACKLETON. Hush! Why, he's stone deaf! Odd! *[To JOHN.]* Isn't it?

DOT. I know he is, but—yes, sir—certainly—there's the spare room, and the bed ready made up!

TACKLETON. Well, now I'm off! Good night, John—good night, Mr. Perrybingle! Take care, Caleb; let that box fall and I'll murder you!

DOT *[to STRANGER]*. This way, sir—this is your room!

[*She takes a candle and beckons the STRANGER to a room at the side. . . .*]

CHIRP THE SECOND.

SCENE.—*The abode of CALEB PLUMMER—a poor, half tumbling down interior. A dresser, on which some common broken crockery is placed. The room is filled with toys of all descriptions, especially dolls' houses and dolls. There are moveable sand toys, and musical carts, fiddles, drums, weapons, Noah's arks, horses. CALEB'S coat hung up.*

[*As the curtain rises CALEB is discovered making a baby-house. He sings:*]

*The glasses sparkle on the board,
The wine is ruby bright,*

[*The door opens—CALEB rises and goes towards it. BERTHA enters and feels her way to the spot where he was sitting. He takes her hand.*]

CALEB. Bertha.

BERTHA. Father. So you were out in the rain last night, in your beautiful new great coat.

CALEB [*looking at his wretched garment and shrugging his shoulders*]. In my beautiful new great coat.

BERTHA. How glad I am you bought it, father.

CALEB. And of such a fashionable tailor, too; it's too good for me.

BERTHA. Too good for you, father; what can be too good for you?

CALEB. I'm half ashamed to wear it though, upon my word. When I hear the boys and people behind me say, "Holloa! Here's a swell!" I don't know which way to look. And when the beggar wouldn't go away last night, and when I said I was a very common man, said, "No, your honor; bless your honor, don't say that;" I was quite ashamed. I really felt as if I hadn't a right to wear it.

BERTHA [*clapping her hands with delight*]. I see you.

father, as plainly as if I had the eyes I never want, when you are with me. A blue coat.

CALEB. Bright blue.

BERTHA. Yes, yes; bright blue! the color I can just remember in the sky. A bright blue coat.

CALEB. Made loose to the figure.

BERTHA. Yes, loose to the figure—[*Laughing.*]—and in it you, dear father, with your merry eye, your smiling face, your free step, and your dark hair, looking so young and handsome—

CALEB. Halloo! halloo! I shall be vain, presently.

BERTHA. Not at all, dear father, not at all. . . .

[*Feels about for her basket, finds it, and begins to dress some dolls.*]

CALEB [*taking up the dolls' house*]. There we are, as near the real thing as sixpenn'orth of half-pence is to sixpence. What a pity that the whole front of the house opens at once. If there was only a staircase in it now, and regular doors to the rooms to go in it; but that's the worst of my calling. I'm always deluding myself and swindling myself.

[*In a low tone.*]

BERTHA. You are speaking quite softly; you are not tired, father?

CALEB. Tired! What could tire me, Bertha? I was never tired.

[*Sings with forced energy.*]

We'll drown it in a bowl!

We'll drown it in a bowl.

[*As he is singing TACKLETON enters.*]

TACKLETON. What, you're singing are you? Go it—I can't sing—I can't afford it—I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work too. Hardly time for both, I should think.

CALEB [*to BERTHA, aside*]. If you could only see him. Bertha, how he's winking at me. Such a man to joke. You'd think, if you didn't know him, he was in earnest; wouldn't you now?

[*BERTHA nods assent.*]

TACKLETON. The bird that can sing, and won't sing, must

be made to sing, they say. What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing—is there anything that *he* should be made to do? . . .

BERTHA. Always merry and lighthearted with us, Mr. Tackleton.

TACKLETON. Oh—there you are—are you? Umph! Well—and being there, how are you?

BERTHA. Oh, well—quite well; as happy as ever you can wish to be. . . . I stood the little plant you sent me, close beside my pillow when I went to sleep last night, and when the day broke, and the red sun—father—the *red* sun—

CALEB. Red in the mornings and evenings, Bertha. . . .

BERTHA. When the sun rose, and the bright light—I almost fear to strike myself against it in walking—came into the room, I turned the little plant towards it, and blessed Heaven for making things so precious, and blessed you for sending them to cheer me.

TACKLETON [*aside*]. Bedlam broke loose! . . . Ugh! Bertha, come here. Shall I tell you a secret?

BERTHA. If you will.

TACKLETON. This is the day on which little What's-her-name—the spoiled child—Perrybingle's wife, pays her regular visit to you—makes her fantastic picnic here—isn't it?

BERTHA. Yes, this is the day.

TACKLETON. I thought so; I should like to join the party.

BERTHA [*gladly*]. Do you hear that, father?

CALEB. Yes, yes, I hear it; but I don't believe it. [*Aside.*] It's one of my lies, no doubt.

TACKLETON. You see, I want to bring the Perrybingles a little more into company with May Fielding. I am going to be married to May.

BERTHA [*with a start*]. Married!

TACKLETON [*muttering*]. She's such a confounded idiot, I was afraid she'd never comprehend me. [*Aloud.*] Yes, married! Church, parson, clerk, beadle, glass coach, bells, breakfast, bride-cake, favors, marrowbones, cleavers, and all the rest of the tom-foolery. A wedding, you know; a wedding! Don't you know what a wedding is?

BERTHA [*much moved*]. I know; I understand.

TACKLETON. Do you? It's more than I expected. Well, I want to join the party, and to bring May and her mother. I'll send in a little something or other before the afternoon; a cold leg of mutton, or some comfortable trifle of that sort. You'll expect me.

BERTHA. Yes. [*Turns away, and her head droops.*]

TACKLETON. I don't think you will, for you seem to have forgotten all about it already. Caleb!

CALEB. . . . Sir!

TACKLETON. Take care she don't forget what I've been saying to her.

CALEB. *She never forgets. It's one of the few things she ain't clever in.*

TACKLETON. Every man thinks his own geese swans. Well, good-bye!— [*Exit.*]

CALEB. [*Takes up a toy wagon, and horses, which he proceeds to put harness on. . . . Sings:*] *The glasses sparkle, etc.*

BERTHA [*puts her hand on his shoulder*]. Father, I am lonely in the dark; I want my eyes—my patient, willing eyes.

CALEB. Here they are; always ready. They are more yours than mine, Bertha. What shall your eyes do for you, dear?

BERTHA. Look round the room, father.

CALEB. All right; no sooner said than done, Bertha.

BERTHA. Tell me about it.

CALEB. It's much the same as usual; homely, but very snug. The gay colors on the walls—the bright flowers on the plates and dishes—the shining wood, where there are beams and panels—the general cheerfulness and neatness of the building make it very pretty.

BERTHA. You have your working-dress on—and are not so gallant as when you wear the handsome coat?

[*Touches him.*]

CALEB. Not quite so gallant. Pretty brisk, though!

BERTHA [*putting her hand around his neck*]. Father, tell me something about May—she is very beautiful?

CALEB. She is, indeed.

BERTHA. Her hair is dark—darker than mine. Her voice is sweet and musical, I know. I have often loved to hear it. Her figure——

CALEB. There's not a doll's, in all the room, to equal it; and her eyes—

BERTHA [*sadly*]. Her eyes, father—

[*Hides her face, and her head sinks on his arm.*]

CALEB. [*Bites his lips. Sings:*] . . . *We'll drown it in a bowl.*

BERTHA. But Mr. Tackleton—our kind, noble friend, father—he is older than May?

CALEB [*hesitating*]. Y-e-e-es—he's a little older, but that don't signify—

BERTHA. Oh! father, yes! To be his patient companion in infirmity and age—to be his gentle nurse in sickness, and his constant friend, in suffering and sorrow—to sit beside his bed, and talk to him, awake, and pray for him, asleep! Would she do all this, dear father?

CALEB. No doubt of it!

BERTHA. I love her father; I can love her from my soul.

[*Clings to him, and is affected.*]

CALEB. Come, Bertha—cheerily! cheerily! I declare, all the dolls are staring at us to remind us that our company will be here soon. Come, Bertha—let us go and see about the potatoes . . . come, come!

[*They exeunt right. Enter MRS. PERRYBINGLE, carrying all sorts of parcels, followed by JOHN, doing the same—and lastly, TILLY, carrying the baby.*]

DOT. Nobody here, to receive us—and nobody come yet! Never mind; we're not proud, John, are we?

[*Undoing bonnet.*]

JOHN. Well, I don't know, Dot; I'm proud of you when you're admired, knowing that you don't mind it.

[*Pulling off great coat.*]

DOT. Now, John—

JOHN. In fact, that you rather like it, perhaps.

DOT. Now, hush, John! I'm sure I'm only proud of our cart; and who wouldn't be? And Boxer.

JOHN. And just getting into the cart—the legs, Dot, eh?

DOT. Now, John, how can you! Think of Tilly. And are you sure you've got the basket with the veal and ham pie, and things—and the bottles of beer? Because if you haven't, we must go back.

JOHN. You're a nice little article, to talk about going back, when you kept me a quarter of an hour after time! They're all right!

DOT. I declare I wouldn't come without the veal and ham pie, and the bottles of beer, for any money! . . .

JOHN. By the bye—that old gentleman—he's an odd fish—I can't make him out—I don't believe there's any harm in him.

DOT. Not at all—I'm sure there's none at all!

JOHN [*with meaning*]. I'm glad you feel so certain—because it's a confirmation to me. It's curious he should have taken it into his head to ask leave to go on lodging with us, ain't it? Things come about so strangely.

DOT [*almost aside*]. So very strangely.

JOHN. However, he's a good-natured old gentleman, and pays as a gentleman, doesn't he? Why, Dot! what are you thinking about?

DOT [*starting*]. Thinking of, John? I—I was listening to you. . . . Here comes Caleb and Bertha! Now they shall help us put things in order!

[*Enter CALEB and BERTHA.*]

CALEB. Halloo, John! here you are then! and missus, too. How d'ye do, mum?

BERTHA [*going to DOT*]. Dear Mary!

CALEB. The rest of the company will be here directly. The potatoes is all right—you never see such picturs—I don't think I could make any half so natural, not if dolls wouldn't have nothing else in their kitchens. Ah! [*A knock.*] There's May and her mother, and Gruff and Tackleton! Come in—come in!

[*Enter TACKLETON with MAY FIELDING on one arm, and MRS. FIELDING on the other, wearing a calash over her cap. TACKLETON is carrying a parcel. CALEB receives them awkwardly.*]

TACKLETON. Well, we're come. . . .

DOT [*going to MAY*]. May! My dear old friend! what a happiness to see you! [*They embrace.*]

TACKLETON. Ah! That's it—women always are so deuced affectionate before people—it's all trick—only to make us envious, don't you think so, Perrybingle?

JOHN. No, I don't! I call that as pleasant a sight as a man might see in a long day. Their faces quite set one another's off. They ought to have been born sisters.

MAY [*to BERTHA*]. And are you quite well and happy, Bertha?

BERTHA. Quite, dear May! How can I be otherwise when you are here?

CALEB. Bless me! I'm quite nervous; I feel as if somebody was pulling a string, and making me jump all ways at once. I'll go and get the potatoes. [*Exit right.*]

TACKLETON. There, there's a leg of mutton. [*Puts it on table.*] And there's a tart. Ah! you may stare, but we don't mind a little dissipation when our brides are in the case. I hav'n't been married a year, you know, John.

DOT [*aside*]. Spiteful creature.

JOHN. Come, let us begin dinner. [*Placing the chairs.*] You have not driven along the road three or four miles; I'm hungry.

CALEB [*enters with a bowl of smoking potatoes*]. You shan't be long, John, you shan't be long. There they are—look at 'em—it's almost a shame to eat 'em. Now, sit down, sit down. You there, mum, if you please—[*To MRS. FIELDING.*—and you there—[*To TACKLETON.*] Perhaps, too, sir, you'd like May next you—it's natural you should. And, Mrs. Perrybingle, you'll go to the side of your old friend, John, here; and Bertha next to me. There we are, beautiful!

DOT. Oh! how comfortable this is! It seems but yester-

day, May, that we were at school; and now to think you are quite a woman grown!

MAY. And you, Dot—married!

JOHN. Yes; and got a baby!

DOT. Now, John! . . .

CALEB. May, you don't eat anything.

DOT. Oh, May's in love, you know, Caleb; and people in love are never hungry. Bless you, it wouldn't be proper; I never was.

TACKLETON. Perhaps you were never in love. Ha! ha!

DOT [*imitating his hollow laugh*]. Ha! ha! What a funny man you are. [*Aside.*] He looks about as much in his own element as a fresh young salmon on the top of the pyramid!

MRS. FIELDING [*gravely*]. Ah! girls are girls, and bygones bygones; and as long as young people are young and thoughtless, they'll behave as young and thoughtless people do.

DOT. Dear May, to talk of those merry school-days makes one young again.

TACKLETON. Why you ain't particularly old at any time, are you?

DOT. Look at my sober, plodding husband, there. He adds twenty years to my age, at least; don't you, John?

JOHN. Forty!

DOT. How many you'll add to May's I'm sure I don't know; but she can't be less than a hundred on her next birthday.

TACKLETON. Ha! ha! [*Aside.*] I could twist her neck like a sparrow's!

DOT. Dear, dear; only to remember how we used to talk at school about the husbands we should choose. I don't know how handsome and young, and how gay and how lively mine was to be. And as to May's; oh, dear! I don't know whether to laugh or cry when I think what silly girls we were.

TACKLETON. Ah! you couldn't help yourselves; for all that you couldn't resist us, you see. Here we are! Here we are! Where are your gay young bridegrooms now?

DOT. Some of them are dead, and some of them forgotten. Some of them, if they could stand among us at this moment,

would not believe we were the same creatures, or that we could forget them so. No, no; they would not believe one word of it.

JOHN. Why, Dot, little woman; what are you thinking of? Come, come, I think we're slighting the bottled beer. I'll give a toast. "Here's to to-morrow, [*They pass the beer round.*] the wedding day"; and we'll drink a bumper to it:

CALEB. Yes, the wedding day.

ALL. The wedding day; the wedding day!

[*BERTHA gets up and leaves the table.*]

JOHN. Well, this is all very well; but I must be stirring. I have got several parcels to deliver now.

CALEB. But you won't be long, John?

JOHN. Oh, no! The old horse has had a bait as well as myself, and we shall soon get over the ground.

CALEB. Well, good bye, John.

JOHN. Good bye—good bye, all! [*To baby.*] Good bye, young shaver. Time will come, I suppose, when you'll turn out into the cold, my little friend, and leave your old father to enjoy his pipe and his rheumatics in the chimney-corner—eh! Where's Dot?

DOT [*starting*]. I'm here, John.

JOHN [*claps his hands*]. Come, come, where's the pipe?

DOT. I forgot the pipe, John. I'll fill it directly.

[*Takes the pipe from his coat.*]

JOHN. Forgot the pipe! Was such a wonder ever heard of? Why, what a clumsy Dot you are this afternoon. I could have done it better myself, I verily believe.

TACKLETON. I'll go with you, John Perrybingle, a little way, if you'll take me. I've got to go down the town.

JOHN. Oh, willingly, willingly! Good-bye, Caleb; good-bye, all! I shall be back very soon.

ALL. Good-bye, John! [*Exit JOHN and TACKLETON.*]

DOT. And now, Tilly, bring me the precious baby—and whilst you help May put the things to rights, and do everything she tells you, I shall sit with Mrs. Fielding at the fire.

MRS. FIELDING. I should have sat by fire-places of a very different kind, if people had done by other people as

the first people ought to do, especially in the Indigo trade.

DOT [*shaking her head*]. Ah, I'm sure you would.

MRS. FIELDING. But when a friend asks any one to befriend that friend's friend, and the friend's friend does not act as such, we must put up with what other friends have to offer us.

DOT. Yes, it's very true, ma'am. But now [*putting a chair*], sit down here, and while baby is in my lap, perhaps you will tell me how to manage it, and put me right upon twenty points, where I am as wrong as can be. Won't you, Mrs. Fielding?

MRS. FIELDING. I see no objection; although before that occurrence with the Indigo, which I always thought would happen, and told Mr. F. so often, but he wouldn't believe me, I never managed my babies at all, but had proper persons whom we paid. My husband was quite enough for me to manage.

DOT. Ah, I should think so.

[DOT seats herself upon a stool, with baby near the fire, and close to MRS. FIELDING. MAY and TILLY are putting the room to rights. CALEB and BERTHA come forward.]

CALEB. Bertha, what has happened? How changed you are, my darling, and in so short a time. What is it? Tell me.

BERTHA [*bursts into tears*]. Oh, father—father—my hard, hard fate!

CALEB. But think how cheerful, and how happy you have been, Bertha! How good, and how much loved by many people. I know to be—blind, is a great affliction—but—

BERTHA. I have never felt it in its fulness. Oh! my good, gentle father, bear with me, if I am wicked. This is not the sorrow that so weighs me down. . . . Bring her to me. May—bring May. [MAY, *hearing it, comes towards her, and touches her arm*. BERTHA *seizes her by the hands*.] Look into my face, dear heart, sweet heart! Read it with your beautiful eyes, and tell me if truth is written on it?

MAY. Dear Bertha, yes.

BERTHA. There is not in my soul a wish, or thought, that

is not for your good, bright May. Every blessing on your head light upon your happy course; not the less, my dear May—not the less, my bird—because, to-day, the knowledge that you are to be *his* wife, has wrung my heart almost to breaking. . . . [CALEB starts amazed.]

• BERTHA. Father—May—Mary! Oh! forgive me, that it is so, for the sake of all he has done to relieve the weariness of my dark life; and for the sake of the belief you have in me, when I call Heaven to witness that I could not wish him married to a wife more worthy of his goodness.

CALEB. Gracious Heaven! Is it possible! Have I deceived her from her cradle, to break her heart at last!

DOT [*who has been listening, advances*]. Come, come, dear Bertha! Come away with me. Give her your arm, May—so! How composed she is, you see, already; and how good it is of her to mind us. [*Kisses her.*] There, dear—come and sit by us. . . .

[*Enter JOHN.*]

DOT. Why, John—how soon you have returned.

JOHN. Well—ain't you glad of it, Dot? I met young Hobbins in the street and he is going to take the cart on, and call for us on his way back.

BERTHA. But whose is the other's step—that of a man's—behind you?

CALEB. She's not to be deceived.

JOHN. Why, who should I overtake, but our old deaf gentleman, who'd been up town to buy some things; so I brought him along with me. Come along, sir, you'll be welcome, never fear!—[*The STRANGER enters.*] He's not so much a stranger, that you haven't seen him once, Caleb. You'll give him house-room till we go?

CALEB. Oh! surely, John; and take it as an honor.

JOHN. He's the best company on earth, to talk secrets in. I have reasonable good lungs, but he tries 'em, I can tell you. Sit down, sir. All friends here, and glad to see you.

CALEB. What can we do to entertain him, John?

JOHN. Oh, nothing! A chair in the corner, and leave to sit quite silent and look pleasantly about him is all he cares for. He's easily pleased. [*Leads the STRANGER to a chair. BERTHA and MAY are talking; so, also, DOT and MRS. FIELDING—to DOT.*] . . . See yonder, Dot! [*Points to STRANGER.*]

DOT [*confused*]. Well John! . . .

JOHN. He's—ha! ha! ha! he's full of admiration for you! Talks of nobody else.

DOT. I wish he had a better subject, John.

JOHN. A better subject: there's no such thing; come, off with the heavy wrappers, and a cosey half hour by the fire. [*To MRS. FIELDING.*] My humble service, mistress. A game at cribbage, you and I? That's hearty: the cards and board, Dot. And a glass of beer, here, if there's any left, small wife.

DOT. Yes, John, plenty!

[*MAY arranges the table and cards, whilst DOT gets the beer.*]

[*TACKLETON enters at the door.*]

MRS. FIELDING. That's quite right, my dear! Thank heaven, I have always found May a dutiful child, though I say it, that ought not, and an excellent wife she will make.

TACKLETON. Well, I don't doubt that.

MRS. FIELDING. And with regard to our family, though we are reduced in purse—I don't say this, sir, out of regard to what we are to play for—but though we are reduced in purse, we have always had some pretensions to gentility.

JOHN. Which nobody doubts, who knows you, mum, or May, either. There's a good Dot. [*DOT brings beer.*] And now we will cut for deal. [*Cuts.*] Seven!

MRS. FIELDING. Nine!

JOHN. Ah! you are fortunate, mistress.

[*The STRANGER, who has been exchanging looks with DOT, gets up, unperceived, and goes towards door left. DOT appears anxious to follow him, as he beckons to her. This is through the dialogue.*]

MRS. FIELDING. Well, I will go to say that if the Indigo trade had turned out different, which, however, is not a pleasant subject to allude to, we *might* have been lucky.

JOHN. Well, here goes. [*Deals.*] Now, I wonder what my fortune will be to-night. Hum! [*Takes his cards.*] What ought I to throw out? Here, Dot, Dot.

[*DOT is about to follow the STRANGER, who is gone out; she starts at JOHN'S voice, and turns back.*]

What would you do, Dot?

DOT [*alarmed*]. I, John; nothing.

JOHN. Pshaw! You? No, the cards—which shall I throw out? [*DOT takes out the cards and throws them down.*] There, little woman, that will do. I won't call you away from May again.

[*DOT retires. The others, except TACKLETON, who watches her, gather round.*]

MRS. FIELDING. I play, I think.

[*During the game DOT has taken a candle from the table, timidly, and followed the STRANGER. The light is seen directly afterwards behind the blind of the large window. When it becomes stationary TACKLETON advances and lays his hand upon JOHN'S shoulder.*]

TACKLETON. I'm sorry to disturb you, but a word immediately.

JOHN. I'm going to deal—it's a crisis.

TACKLETON. It is; come here, man, come.

JOHN [*rising, alarmed*]. What do you mean?

TACKLETON [*leading him from the cards*]. . . . Hush! I'll show you. . . .

[*He advances to the window and draws back the blind. The window looks into a warehouse, now lighted, in which are seen DOT and the STRANGER, as a young man, with his arm around her waist—she takes his white wig, and laughs, as she puts it on his head.*]

JOHN [*in horror*]. Dot! Dot. . . .

CHIRP THE THIRD

SCENE.—*The interior of JOHN PERRYBINGLE'S cottage. JOHN is discovered, sitting by the fire-place, with his head upon his hands. The chirp of the cricket is heard. A pause. JOHN TACKLETON enters.]*

TACKLETON. John Perrybingle, my good fellow, how do you find yourself this morning?

JOHN. I have had a poor night, master Tackleton, for I have been a good deal disturbed in my mind; but it's over now. I wish to speak a word or two with you.

[*Enter TILLY, right, crosses to door left and knocks.*]

You are not married before noon.

TACKLETON. No, plenty of time—plenty of time.

TILLY. Ow! If you please I can't make nobody hear. I hope nobody ain't gone and been and died, if you please.

[*She knocks at the STRANGER'S door, and then exits right.*]

TACKLETON. John Perrybingle, I hope there has been nothing—nothing rash in the night.

JOHN. What do you mean?

TACKLETON. Because as I came here I looked into the window of that room. It was empty and he was gone. There has been no scuffle, eh?

JOHN. Make yourself easy. He went into that room last night without word or harm from me, and nobody has entered it since.

TACKLETON. Oh! well; I think he has got off pretty easily.

JOHN. Look ye, master Tackleton, you showed me last night my wife—my wife, that I love, secretly.

TACKLETON. And tenderly.

JOHN. Conniving at that man's disguise, and giving him opportunities of meeting her alone. I think there's no sight I wouldn't rather have seen than that. I think there's no man in the world I wouldn't have rather had to show it me.

TACKLETON. I confess to having had my suspicions always; and that has made me objectionable here, I know.

JOHN. But as you did show it me, and as you saw her—my wife—*my wife—that I love*, at this disadvantage, it is right and just that you should also see with my eyes, and look into my breast, and know what my mind is upon the subject; for it's settled, and nothing can shake it now.

TACKLETON. Go on, John Perrybingle, I'll listen to you.

JOHN. I am a plain rough man, with very little to recommend me. I am not a clever man, as you very well know. I am not a young man. I loved my little Dot because I had seen her grow up from a child in her father's house; because I knew how precious she was; because she had been my life for years and years. There's many men I can't compare with, who never could have loved my little Dot like me, I think; but I did not—I feel it now, sufficiently consider her.

TACKLETON. To be sure—giddiness, frivolity, fickleness, love of admiration—not considered; all left out of sight, ha!

JOHN. You had best not interrupt me till you understand me; and you're wide of doing so. If yesterday I'd have struck down that man with a blow, who dared to breathe a word against her, to-day I'd set my foot upon his face, if he was my brother.

TACKLETON. I did not mean anything, John Perrybingle; go on.

JOHN. Did I consider that I took her, at her age, and with her beauty, from her young companions, . . . to shut her up from day to day in my dull house—and keep my tedious company? Did I consider how little suited I was to her sprightly humor, and how wearisome a plodding man like me must be to one of her quick spirit? Did I consider that it was no merit in me, or claim in me that I loved her, when everybody must who knew her! Never! I took advantage of her hopeful nature and her cheerful disposition, and I married her. I wish I never had—for her sake, not for mine.

TACKLETON. For your own as well, John.

JOHN. I say *no*. Heaven bless her for the constancy with which she has tried to keep the knowledge of this from me. Poor girl! That I could ever hope she would be fond of me—that I could ever believe she was.

TACKLETON. She made a show of it—she made such a show of it, that, to tell you the truth, it was the origin of my misgivings. Look at May Fielding; *she* never pretends to be so fond of me.

JOHN. I only now begin to know how hard she has tried to be my dutiful and zealous wife. That will be some comfort to me when I am here alone.

TACKLETON. Here alone? Oh, then! You do mean to take some notice of this?

JOHN. I mean to do her the greatest kindness and make her the best reparation in my power.

TACKLETON. Make *her* reparation? There must be something wrong here. You didn't mean that, of course?

JOHN [*seizing him by the collar*]. Listen to me, and take care you hear me right. Listen to me—do I speak plainly?

TACKLETON. Very plainly, indeed.

JOHN. As if I meant it?

TACKLETON. Very much as if you meant it.

JOHN. I sat upon that hearth, last night—all night—on the spot where she has often sat beside me. . . . I called up her whole life—its every passage—in review before me; and, *upon my soul, she is innocent.* . . .

TACKLETON. Very likely, John Perrybingle; very likely.

JOHN. Passion and distrust have left me; nothing but my grief remains. In an unhappy moment, some old lover, forsaken, perhaps for me, against her will, returned. In an unhappy moment, wanting time to think of what she did, she made herself a party to his treachery, by concealing it. Last night she saw him, in the interview we witnessed; it was wrong; but, otherwise than this, she is innocent, if there is truth on earth.

TACKLETON. If that is your opinion?

JOHN. So let her go. Go, with my blessing for the many happy hours she has given me, and my forgiveness for any pang she has caused me. She'll never hate me. She'll learn to like me better, when I am not a drag upon her.

[*Dot appears at the back, pale and anxious.*]

TACKLETON. Well, I must be off; for it's necessary for me to be on my way to church. Good morning, John Perrybingle, I'm sorry to be deprived of the pleasure of your company—sorry for the loss and the occasion of it, too. . . .

JOHN. I'll see you into your chaise.

[TACKLETON *makes a rude obeisance to DOT. As he is going out with JOHN, DOT covers her eyes with her hands. A pause. CALEB and BERTHA enter.*]

BERTHA. Mary, where is your hand? Ah, here it is! here it is! [*Kisses it.*] I heard them speaking softly among themselves, last night, of some blame against you. They were wrong.

CALEB. They were wrong.

BERTHA. I know it—I told them so. . . . There is nothing half so real, or so true about me, as she is—my sister!

CALEB. Bertha, my dear, I have something on my mind I want to tell you, while we three are alone; hear me kindly, I have a confession to make to you, my darling.

BERTHA. A confession, father?

CALEB. I have wandered from the truth, and lost myself, intending to be kind to you. My dear blind daughter, hear me, and forgive me.

BERTHA. Forgive *you*, father—so good, so kind!

CALEB. Your road in life was rough, my poor one, and I meant to smooth it for you. I have altered objects, changed the characters of people, invented many things that never have been, to make you happier—Heaven forgive me—and surrounded you with fancies.

BERTHA. But living people are not fancies, father; you can't change them.

CALEB. I have done so, Bertha. There is one person that you know—

BERTHA. Oh, father! why do you say I know? What, and whom do *I* know—I, who have no leader—I, so miserably blind!

CALEB. The marriage that takes place to-day—May's mar-

riage—is with a sordid, stern, grinding man; a hard master to you and me, my dear, for many years; ugly in his looks, and in his nature; cold and callous always—unlike what I have painted him to you, in everything, my child, in everything.

BERTHA. [*Covers her face with her hands, then turns to DOT.*] . . . Mary, tell me what my home is—what it truly is.

DOT. It is a poor place, Bertha, very poor and bare. Indeed the house will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. It is as roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha, as your poor father, in his sackcloth coat.

BERTHA [*leading DOT aside*]. And the presents, Mary, that came at my wish; who sent them, did you?

DOT. No!

BERTHA [*shaking her head, presses her hands to her eyes*]. Dear Mary, a moment more. Look across the room where my father is, and tell me what you see.

DOT. I see an old man worn with care and work; but striving hard, in many ways, for one great sacred object; and I honor his gray head, and bless it.

BERTHA [*leaves DOT, goes toward CALEB, and falls at his knees*]. I feel as if my sight was restored. There is not a gallant figure on the earth that I would cherish so devotedly as this—the grayer and more worn, the dearer—father.

CALEB. My Bertha!

BERTHA. And, in my blindness, I believed him to be so different!

CALEB. The fresh, smart father, in the blue coat, Bertha—he's gone.

BERTHA. Nothing is gone, dearest father. No; everything is here in you—father. And Mary—

* CALEB. Yes, my dear!

BERTHA. There is no change in *her*. You never told me anything of *her* that was not true?

CALEB. I should have done it, my dear, I fear, if I could have made her better than she was. But I must have changed her for the worse, if I had changed her at all—nothing could improve her, Bertha.

DOT. . . . Bertha! hark! are those wheels upon the road?

BERTHA [*listens*]. Yes! coming very fast.

DOT [*flurried*]. I—I—I know you have a quick ear—
[*Listens.*] They are wheels, indeed—coming nearer—very close—and now you hear them stopping at the garden gate—

[*She utters a cry of delight. The STRANGER, now a young man, comes in, throwing his hat upon the ground. DOT puts both her hands before CALEB's eyes.*]

DOT. It's over?

EDWARD. Yes.

DOT. Happily over?

EDWARD. Yes.

DOT. Do you recollect the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear the like of it before?

CALEB. If my boy, in the golden South Americas, was alive—

DOT. He is alive! [*Takes her hands away from CALEB's eyes.*] Look at him! See where he stands before you—healthy and strong! Your own dear son—your own dear, living, brother, Bertha.
[*They embrace.*]

[*JOHN enters, and starts back.*]

JOHN. Why—how's this? What does this mean?

CALEB. It means, John, that my own boy is come back from the golden South Americas—him, that you fitted out, and sent away, yourself—him, that you were always such a friend to.

JOHN [*advances to shake hands, then recoils*]. Edward! Was it you?

DOT. Now tell him all, Edward; tell him all, and don't spare me, for nothing shall make me spare myself in his eyes ever again.

EDWARD. I was the man.

JOHN. And could you steal disguised into the house of your old friend? There was a frank boy once—how many years is it, Caleb, since we heard he was dead, and had it proved, as we thought?—who never would have done that.

EDWARD. There was a generous friend of mine once—more a father to me than a friend—who never would have judged me, or any other man, unheard. You were he—so I am certain you will hear me now.

JOHN. That's but fair. I will.

EDWARD. You must know that when I left here, a boy, I was in love; and my love was returned. She was a very young girl, who, perhaps, (you may tell me) didn't know her own mind. But I knew mine, and I had a passion for her.

JOHN. You had—

EDWARD. And she returned it; I have ever since believed she did, and now I am sure she did.

JOHN. Heaven help me! This is worse than all.

EDWARD. Constant to her, and returning full of hope, after many hardships and perils, to redeem my part of our old contract, I heard, twenty miles away, that she was false to me, that she had forgotten me, and had bestowed herself upon another and a richer man. I had no mind to reproach her, but I wished to see her, and to prove beyond dispute that this was true. That I might have the truth—the real truth—observing freely for myself, and judging for myself, without obstruction on the one hand, or presenting my own influence, if I had any, before her, on the other, I dressed myself unlike myself—you know how—and waited on the road, you know where. You had no suspicion of me, neither had—had she, [*Points to Dor.*] until I whispered into her ear at the fireside, and she so nearly betrayed me.

Dor [*eagerly*]. But when she knew that Edward was alive and had come back, and when she knew his purpose—she advised him, by all means, to keep his secret close; for his old friend, John Perrybingle, was too much open in his nature, and too clumsy in all artifice, being a clumsy man in general, to keep it from him. And when she, that's me, John, told him all, and how his old sweetheart had believed him to be dead, and how she had, at last, been over-persuaded by her mother into a marriage, which the silly, dear old thing called advantageous; and when she, that's me again, John, told him they were not yet married, though close upon it,

and that it would be nothing but a sacrifice, if it went on, for that there was no love on her side, and when he went nearly mad with joy to hear it, then she, that's me again, said she would go between them, as she had often done before in old times, John, and would sound his sweetheart, and be sure that what she, me again, John, said and thought was right, and it *was* right, John! And they were brought together, John! And they were married, John, an hour ago, and here, here—[*Runs to door, and brings in MAY.*]*—and here's the bride; and Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor, and I'm a happy little woman, may God bless you!*

JOHN [*advancing*]. My own darling Dot!

DOT [*retreats*]. No, John, no! hear all— . . . When I first came home here, I was half afraid I mightn't learn to love you every bit as well as I hoped, and prayed I might; but, dear John, every day, and every hour, I loved you more and more. . . . All the affection I had—it was a great deal, John—I gave you, as you well deserved, long, long ago, and I have no more left to give. Take me to your heart again. That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other.

[*He takes her in his arms. At this moment TACKLETON enters, followed by TILLY with the baby.*]

TACKLETON. Why, what the devil's this, John Perrybingle? There's some mistake! I beg your pardon sir [*To EDWARD.*], I haven't the pleasure of knowing you; but if you can do me the favor to spare me that young lady, she has rather a particular engagement with me this morning.

EDWARD. But I can't spare her—I couldn't think of it.

TACKLETON. What do you mean, you vagabond!

EDWARD. I mean that I am as deaf to *harsh* discourse, this morning, as I was to *all* discourse last night.

TACKLETON. I don't understand you.

EDWARD. I am sorry, sir [*Holding out MAY's ring finger.*], that the young lady can't accompany you to church; but as she has been there once, this morning, perhaps you will excuse her.

[TACKLETON looks at the ring, scratches his ear, and takes a little parcel containing a ring from his pocket.]

TACKLETON. Miss Slowboy, will you have the kindness to throw that in the fire? [*She does so.*] Thank'ee!

EDWARD. It was a previous engagement, quite an old engagement, that prevented my wife from keeping her appointment with you, I assure you.

MAY. Mr. Tackleton will do me justice to acknowledge that I revealed it to him faithfully; and that I told him many times I never could forget it.

TACKLETON. Oh! certainly! Oh, to be sure! Oh, it's all right, it's quite correct! Mrs. Edward Plummer, I infer—

EDWARD. That's the name.

TACKLETON. Ah! I shouldn't have known you, sir—I give you joy, sir!

EDWARD. Thank'ee.

TACKLETON. Mrs. Perrybingle, I'm sorry you haven't done me a very great kindness, but, upon my life, I'm sorry. You are better than I thought you. John Perrybingle, I am sorry—you understand me, that's enough. It's quite correct, ladies and gentlemen all, and perfectly satisfactory. Good morning! [*Exit.*]

JOHN. Now we'll make a day of it, if ever there was one!

DOT. And we'll have such a feast, and such a merry-making! Dear John, I hardly know whether to laugh or cry. . . . Tilly! Run to father's, and bring him in, and mother, too, and anything they have got to eat and drink that's ready. [*She snatches the baby from TILLY and kisses it.*] And May—spare her for a few minutes, Edward—there's a tub of ale in the cellar, and there's the key; and Bertha shall look after these vegetables; and we've a nice ham—[*turning impulsively to JOHN*]*—John, you won't send me home this evening, will you?* [*He laughs and embraces her.*]

MISS JULIA

(1888)

BY

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Translated by Edwin Björkman

Copyright, 1912, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

Reprinted by special permission of Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

CHARACTERS

MISS JULIA.

JEAN, a valet.

CHRISTINE, a cook.

The action takes place on Midsummer Eve, in the kitchen of the count's country house.

MISS JULIA

SCENE.—A large kitchen: the ceiling and the side walls are hidden by draperies and hangings. The rear wall runs diagonally across the stage, from the left side and away from the spectators. On this wall, to the left, there are two shelves full of utensils made of copper, iron, and tin. The shelves are trimmed with scalloped paper.

A little to the right may be seen three-fourths of the big arched doorway leading to the outside. It has double glass doors, through which are seen a fountain with a cupid, lilac shrubs in bloom, and the tops of some Lombardy poplars.

On the left side of the stage is seen the corner of a big cook-stove built of glazed bricks; also a part of the smoke-hood above it.

From the right protrudes one end of the servants' dining-table of white pine, with a few chairs about it.

The stove is dressed with bundled branches of birch. Twigs of juniper are scattered on the floor.

On the table end stands a big Japanese spice pot full of lilac blossoms.

An icebox, a kitchen-table, and a wash-stand.

Above the door hangs a big old-fashioned bell on a steel spring, and the mouthpiece of a speaking-tube appears at the left of the door.

[CHRISTINE is standing by the stove, frying something in a pan. She has on a dress of light-coloured cotton, which she has covered up with a big kitchen apron.

JEAN enters, dressed in livery and carrying a pair of big, spurred riding-boots, which he places on the floor in such manner that they remain visible to the spectators.]

JEAN. To-night Miss Julia is crazy again; absolutely crazy.

CHRISTINE. So you're back again?

JEAN. I took the count to the station, and when I came back by the barn, I went in and had a dance, and there I saw the young lady leading the dance with the gamekeeper. But when she caught sight of me, she rushed right up to me and asked me to dance the ladies' waltz with her. And ever since she's been waltzing like—well, I never saw the like of it. She's crazy!

CHRISTINE. And has always been, but never the way it's been this last fortnight, since her engagement was broken.

JEAN. Well, what kind of a story was that anyhow? He's a fine fellow, isn't he, although he isn't rich? Ugh, but they're so full of notions. [*Sits down at the end of the table.*] It's peculiar anyhow, that a young lady—hm!—would rather stay at home with the servants—don't you think?—than go with her father to their relatives!

CHRISTINE. Oh, I guess she feels sort of embarrassed by that rumpus with her fellow.

JEAN. Quite likely. But there was some backbone to that man just the same. Do you know how it happened, Christine? I saw it, although I didn't care to let on.

CHRISTINE. No, did you?

JEAN. Sure, I did. They were in the stable-yard one evening, and the young lady was training him, as she called it. Do you know what that meant? She made him leap over her horse-whip the way you teach a dog to jump. Twice he jumped and got a cut each time. The third time he took the whip out of her hand and broke it into a thousand bits. And then he got out.

CHRISTINE. So that's the way it happened? You don't say!

JEAN. Yes, that's how that thing happened. Well, Christine, what have you got that's tasty?

CHRISTINE. [*Serves from the pan and puts the plate before JEAN.*] Oh, just some kidney which I cut out of the veal roast.

JEAN [*smelling the food*]. Fine! That's my great *délice*. [*Feeling the plate.*] But you might have warmed the plate.

CHRISTINE. Well, if you ain't harder to please than the count himself! *[Pulls his hair playfully.]*

JEAN *[irritated]*. Don't pull my hair! You know how sensitive I am.

CHRISTINE. Well, well, it was nothing but a love pull, you know.

[JEAN eats. CHRISTINE opens a bottle of beer.]

JEAN. Beer—on Midsummer Eve? No, thank you! Then I have something better myself. *[Opens a table-drawer and takes out a bottle of claret with yellow cap.]* Yellow seal, mind you! Give me a glass—and you use those with stems when you drink it *pure*.

CHRISTINE. *[Returns to the stove and puts a small pan on the fire.]* Heaven preserve her that gets you for a husband, Mr. Finicky!

JEAN. Oh, rot! You'd be glad enough to get a smart fellow like me. And I guess it hasn't hurt you that they call me your beau. *[Tasting the wine.]* Good! Pretty good! Just a tiny bit too cold. *[He warms the glass with his hands.]* We got this at Dijon. It cost us four francs per litre, not counting the bottle. And there was the duty besides. What is it you're cooking—with that infernal smell?

CHRISTINE. Oh, it's some deviltry the young lady is going to give Diana.

JEAN. You should choose your words with more care, Christine. But why should you be cooking for a bitch on a holiday eve like this? Is she sick?

CHRISTINE. Ye-es, she is sick. She's been running around with the gate-keeper's pug—and now's there's trouble—and the young lady just won't hear of it.

JEAN. The young lady is too stuck up in some ways and not proud enough in others—just as was the countess while she lived. She was most at home in the kitchen and among the cows, but she would never drive with only one horse. She wore her cuffs till they were dirty, but she had to have cuff buttons with a coronet on them. And speaking of the young lady, she doesn't take proper care of herself and her person. I might even say that she's lacking in refinement.

Just now, when she was dancing in the barn, she pulled the gamekeeper away from Anna and asked him herself to come and dance with her. We wouldn't act in that way. But that's just how it is: when upper-class people want to demean themselves, then they grow—mean! But she's splendid! Magnificent! Oh, such shoulders! And—and so on!

CHRISTINE. Oh, well, don't brag too much! I've heard Clara talking, who tends to her dressing.

JEAN. Pooh, Clara! You're always jealous of each other. I, who have been out riding with her— And then the way she dances!

CHRISTINE. Say, Jean, won't you dance with me when I'm done?

JEAN. Of course I will.

CHRISTINE. Do you promise?

JEAN. Promise? When I say so, I'll do it. Well, here's thanks for the good food. It tasted fine!

[*Puts the cork back into the bottle.*]

JULIA [*appears in the doorway, speaking to somebody on the outside*]. I'll be back in a minute. You go right on in the meantime.

[*JEAN slips the bottle into the table-drawer and rises respectfully.*]

JULIA. [*Enters and goes over to CHRISTINE by the washstand.*] Well, is it done yet?

[*CHRISTINE signs to her that JEAN is present.*]

JEAN [*gallantly*]. The ladies are having secrets, I believe.

JULIA [*strikes him in the face with her handkerchief*]. That's for you, Mr. Pry!

JEAN. Oh, what a delicious odor that violet has!

JULIA [*with coquetry*]. Impudent! So you know something about perfumes also? And know pretty well how to dance—Now don't peep! Go away!

JEAN [*with polite impudence*]. Is it some kind of witches' broth the ladies are cooking on Midsummer Eve—something to tell fortunes by and bring out the lucky star in which one's future love is seen?

JULIA [*sharply*]. If you can see that, you'll have good eyes, indeed! [*To CHRISTINE.*] Put it in a pint bottle and cork it well. Come and dance a *schottische* with me now, Jean.

JEAN [*hesitatingly*]. I don't want to be impolite, but I had promised to dance with Christine this time——

JULIA. Well, she can get somebody else—can't you, Christine? Won't you let me borrow Jean from you?

CHRISTINE. That isn't for me to say. When Miss Julia is so gracious, it isn't for him to say no. You just go along, and be thankful for the honour, too!

JEAN. Frankly speaking, but not wishing to offend in any way, I cannot help wondering if it's wise for Miss Julia to dance twice in succession with the same partner, especially as the people here are not slow in throwing out hints——

JULIA [*flaring up*]. What is that? What kind of hints? What do you mean?

JEAN [*submissively*]. As you don't want to understand, I have to speak more plainly. It don't look well to prefer one servant to all the rest who are expecting to be honoured in the same unusual way——

JULIA. Prefer! What ideas! I'm surprised! I, the mistress of the house, deign to honour this dance with my presence, and when it so happens that I actually want to dance, I want to dance with one who knows how to lead, so that I am not made ridiculous.

JEAN. As you command, Miss Julia! I am at your service!

JULIA [*softened*]. Don't take it as a command. To-night we should enjoy ourselves as a lot of happy people, and all rank should be forgotten. Now give me your arm. Don't be afraid, Christine! I'll return your beau to you!

[JEAN offers his arm to MISS JULIA and leads her out.]

PANTOMIME

*Must be acted as if the actress were really alone in the place.
When necessary she turns her back to the public. She*

should not look in the direction of the spectators, and she should not hurry as if fearful that they might become impatient.

CHRISTINE is alone. A schottische tune played on a violin is heard faintly in the distance.

While humming the tune, CHRISTINE clears off the table after JEAN, washes the plate at the kitchen table, wipes it, and puts it away in a cupboard.

Then she takes off her apron, pulls out a small mirror from one of the table-drawers and leans it against the flower jar on the table; lights a tallow candle and heats a hairpin, which she uses to curl her front hair.

Then she goes to the door and stands there listening. Returns to the table. Discovers the handkerchief which Miss JULIA has left behind, picks it up, and smells it, spreads it out absent-mindedly and begins to stretch it, smooth it, fold it up, and so forth.

JEAN. [*Enters alone.*] Crazy, that's what she is! The way she dances! And the people stand behind the doors and grin at her. What do you think of it, Christine?

CHRISTINE. Oh, she has her time now, and then she is always a little queer like that. But are you going to dance with me now?

JEAN. You are not mad at me because I disappointed you?

CHRISTINE. No!—Not for a little thing like that, you know! And also, I know my place——

JEAN [*putting his arm around her waist*]. . You are a sensible girl, Christine, and I think you'll make a good wife——

JULIA. [*Enters and is unpleasantly surprised; speaks with forced gayety.*] Yes, you are a fine partner—running away from your lady!

JEAN. On the contrary, Miss Julia. I have, as you see, looked up the one I deserted.

JULIA [*changing tone*]. Do you know, there is nobody that dances like you!—But why do you wear your livery on an evening like this? Take it off at once!

JEAN. Then I must ask you to step outside for a moment,

as my black coat is hanging right here. [*Points toward the right and goes in that direction*].

JULIA. Are you bashful on my account? Just to change a coat? Why don't you go into your own room and come back again? Or, you can stay right here, and I'll turn my back on you.

JEAN. With your permission, Miss Julia. [*Goes further over to the right; one of his arms can be seen as he changes his coat.*]

JULIA [*to CHRISTINE*]. Are you and Jean engaged, that he's so familiar with you?

CHRISTINE. Engaged? Well, in a way. We call it that.

JULIA. Call it?

CHRISTINE. Well, Miss Julia, you have had a fellow of your own, and——

JULIA. We were really engaged——

CHRISTINE. But it didn't come to anything just the same——

JEAN *enters, dressed in black frock coat and black derby.*

JULIA. *Très gentil, Monsieur Jean! Très gentil!*

JEAN. *Vous voulez plaisanter, Madame!*

JULIA. *Et vous voulez parler français!* Where did you learn it?

JEAN. In Switzerland, while I worked as *sommelier* in one of the big hotels at Lucerne.

JULIA. But you look like a real gentleman in your frock coat! Charming! [*Sits down at the table.*]

JEAN. Oh, you flatter me.

JULIA [*offended*]. Flatter—you!

JEAN. My natural modesty does not allow me to believe that you could be paying genuine compliments to one like me, and so I dare to assume that you are exaggerating, or, as we call it, flattering.

JULIA. Where did you learn to use your words like that? You must have been to the theatre a great deal?

JEAN. That, too. I have been to a lot of places.

JULIA. But you were born in this neighbourhood?

JEAN. My father was a cotter on the county attorney's property right by here, and I can recall seeing you as a child, although you, of course, didn't notice me.

JULIA. No, really!

JEAN. Yes, and I remember one time in particular—but of that I can't speak.

JULIA. Oh, yes, do! Why—just for once.

JEAN. No, really, I cannot do it now. Another time, perhaps.

JULIA. Another time is no time. Is it as bad as that?

JEAN. It isn't bad, but it comes a little hard. Look at that one! [*Points to CHRISTINE, who has fallen asleep on a chair by the stove.*]

JULIA. She'll make a pleasant wife. And perhaps she snores, too.

JEAN. No, she doesn't, but she talks in her sleep.

JULIA [*cynically*]. How do you know?

JEAN [*insolently*]. I have heard it.

[*Pause during which they study each other.*]

JULIA. Why don't you sit down?

JEAN. It wouldn't be proper in your presence.

JULIA. But if I order you to do it?

JEAN. Then I obey.

JULIA. Sit down, then!—But wait a moment! Can you give me something to drink first?

JEAN. I don't know what we have got in the icebox. I fear it is nothing but beer.

JULIA. And you call that nothing? My taste is so simple that I prefer it to wine.

JEAN. [*Takes a bottle of beer from the icebox and opens it; gets a glass and a plate from the cupboard, and serves the beer.*] Allow me!

JULIA. Thank you. Don't you want some yourself?

JEAN. I don't care very much for beer, but if it is a command, of course——

JULIA. Command?—I should think a polite gentleman might keep his lady company.

JEAN. Yes, that's the way it should be.

[*Opens another bottle and takes out a glass.*]

JULIA. Drink my health now!

[*JEAN hesitates.*]

JULIA. Are you bashful—a big, grown-up man?

JEAN. [*Kneels with mock solemnity and raises his glass.*]

To the health of my liege lady!

JULIA. Bravo!—And now you must also kiss my shoe in order to get it just right.

[*JEAN hesitates a moment; then he takes hold of her foot and touches it lightly with his lips.*]

JULIA. Excellent! You should have been on the stage.

JEAN [*rising to his feet*]. This won't do any longer, Miss

Julia. Somebody might see us.

JULIA. What would that matter?

JEAN. Oh, it would set the people talking—that's all! And if you only knew how their tongues were wagging up there a while ago——

JULIA. What did they have to say? Tell me— Sit down now!

JEAN. [*Sits down.*] I don't want to hurt you, but they were using expressions—which cast reflections of a kind that—oh, you know it yourself! You are not a child, and when a lady is seen alone with a man, drinking—no matter if he's only a servant—and at night—then——

JULIA. Then what? And besides, we are not alone. Isn't Christine with us?

JEAN. Yes—asleep!

JULIA. Then I'll wake her. [*Rising.*] Christine, are you asleep?

CHRISTINE [*in her sleep*]. Blub-blub-blub-blub!

JULIA. Christine!—Did you ever see such a sleeper.

CHRISTINE [*in her sleep*]. The count's boots are polished—put on the coffee—yes, yes, yes—my-my—pooh!

JULIA. [*Pinches her nose.*] Can't you wake up?

JEAN [*sternly*]. You shouldn't bother those that sleep.

JULIA [*sharply*]. What's that?

JEAN. One who has stood by the stove all day has a right to be tired at night. And sleep should be respected.

JULIA [*changing tone*]. It is fine to think like that, and it does you honour—I thank you for it. [*Gives JEAN her hand.*] Come now and pick some lilacs for me.

[*During the following scene CHRISTINE wakes up. She moves as if still asleep and goes out to the right in order to go to bed.*]

JEAN. With you, Miss Julia?

JULIA. With me!

JEAN. But it won't do! Absolutely not!

JULIA. I can't understand what you are thinking of. You couldn't possibly imagine——

JEAN. No, not I, but the people.

JULIA. What? That I am fond of the valet?

JEAN. I am not at all conceited, but such things have happened—and to the people nothing is sacred.

JULIA. You are an aristocrat, I think.

JEAN. Yes, I am.

JULIA. And I am stepping down——

JEAN. Take my advice, Miss Julia, don't step down. Nobody will believe you did it on purpose. The people will always say that you fell down.

JULIA. I think better of the people than you do. Come and see if I am not right. Come along! [*She ogles him.*]

JEAN. You're mighty queer, do you know!

JULIA. Perhaps. But so are you. And for that matter, everything is queer. Life, men, everything—just as mush that floats on top of the water until it sinks, sinks down! I have a dream that comes back to me ever so often. And just now I am reminded of it. I have climbed to the top of a column and sat there without being able to tell how to get down again. I get dizzy when I look down, and I must get down, but I haven't the courage to jump off. I cannot hold on, and I am longing to fall, and yet I don't fall. But there will be no rest for me until I get down, no rest until I get down, down on the ground. And if I did reach the ground,

I should want to get still further down, into the ground itself—Have you ever felt like that?

JEAN. No, my dream is that I am lying under a tall tree in a dark wood. I want to get up, up to the top, so that I can look out over the smiling landscape, where the sun is shining, and so that I can rob the nest in which lie the golden eggs. And I climb and climb, but the trunk is so thick and smooth, and it is so far to the first branch. But I know that if I could only reach the first branch, then I should go right on to the top as on a ladder. I have not reached it yet, but I am going to, if it only be in my dreams.

JULIA. Here I am chattering to you about dreams! Come along! Only into the park!

[*She offers her arm to him, and they go toward the door.*]

JEAN. We must sleep on nine midsummer flowers to-night, Miss Julia—then our dreams will come true.

[*They turn around in the doorway, and JEAN puts one hand up to his eyes.*]

JULIA. Let me see what you have got in your eye.

JEAN. Oh, nothing—just some dirt—it will soon be gone.

JULIA. It was my sleeve that rubbed against it. Sit down and let me help you. [*Takes him by the arm and makes him sit down; takes hold of his head and bends it backwards; tries to get out the dirt with a corner of her handkerchief.*] Sit still now, absolutely still! [*Slaps him on the hand.*] Well, can't you do as I say? I think you are shaking—a big, strong fellow like you! [*Feels his biceps.*] And with such arms!

JEAN [*ominously*]. Miss Julia!

JULIA. Yes, Monsieur Jean.

JEAN. *Attention! Je ne suis qu' un homme.*

JULIA. Can't you sit still!— There now! Now it's gone. Kiss my hand now, and thank me.

JEAN [*rising*]. Miss Julia, listen to me. Christine has gone to bed now— Won't you listen to me?

JULIA. Kiss my hand first.

JEAN. Listen to me!

JULIA. Kiss my hand first!

JEAN. All right, but blame nobody but yourself!

JULIA. For what?

JEAN. For what? Are you still a mere child at twenty-five? Don't you know that it is dangerous to play with fire?

JULIA. Not for me. I am insured.

JEAN [*boldly*]. No, you are not. And even if you were, there are inflammable surroundings to be counted with.

JULIA. That's you, I suppose?

JEAN. Yes. Not because I am I, but because I am a young man——

JULIA. Of handsome appearance—what an incredible conceit! A Don Juan, perhaps. Or a Joseph? On my soul, I think you are a Joseph!

JEAN. Do you?

JULIA. I fear it almost.

[JEAN goes boldly up to her and takes her around the waist in order to kiss her.]

JULIA. [*Gives him a cuff on the ear.*] Shame!

JEAN. Was that in play or in earnest?

JULIA. In earnest.

JEAN. Then you were in earnest a moment ago also. Your playing is too serious, and that's the dangerous thing about it. Now I am tired of playing, and I ask to be excused in order to resume my work. The count wants his boots to be ready for him, and it is after midnight already.

JULIA. Put away the boots.

JEAN. No, it's my work, which I am bound to do. But I have not undertaken to be your playmate. It's something I can never become—I hold myself too good for it.

JULIA. You're proud!

JEAN. In some ways, and not in others.

JULIA. Have you ever been in love?

JEAN. We don't use that word. But I have been fond of a lot of girls, and once I was taken sick because I couldn't have the one I wanted: sick, you know, like those princes in the Arabian Nights who cannot eat or drink for sheer love.

JULIA. Who was it?

[JEAN remains silent.]

JULIA. Who was it?

JEAN. You cannot make me tell you.

JULIA. If I ask you as an equal, ask you as—a friend: who was it?

JEAN. It was you.

JULIA. [*Sits down.*] How funny!

JEAN. Yes, as you say—it was ludicrous. That was the story, you see, which I didn't want to tell you a while ago. But now I am going to tell it. Do you know how the world looks from below—no, you don't. No more than do hawks and falcons, of whom we never see the back because they are always floating about high up in the sky. I lived in the cotter's hovel, together with seven other children, and a pig—out there on the grey plain, where there isn't a single tree. But from our windows I could see the wall around the count's park, and apple-trees above it. That was the Garden of Eden, and many fierce angels were guarding it with flaming swords. Nevertheless I and some other boys found our way to the Tree of Life—now you despise me?

JULIA. Oh, stealing apples is something all boys do.

JEAN. You may say so now, but you despise me nevertheless. However—once I got into the Garden of Eden with my mother to weed the onion beds. Near by stood a Turkish pavillion, shaded by trees and covered with honeysuckle. I didn't know what it was used for, but I had never seen a more beautiful building. People went in and came out again, and one day the door was left wide open. I stole up and saw the walls covered with pictures of kings and emperors, and the windows were hung with red, fringed curtains—now you know what I mean. I—[*breaks off a lilac sprig and holds it under Miss JULIA's nose*—I had never been inside the manor, and I had never seen anything but the church—and this was much finer. No matter where my thoughts ran, they returned always—to that place. And gradually a longing arose within me to taste the full pleasure of—*enfin!* I sneaked in, looked and admired. Then I heard somebody coming. There was only one way out for fine people, but

for me there was another, and I could do nothing else but choose it.

[JULIA, *who has taken the lilac sprig, lets it drop on the table.*]

JEAN. Then I started to run, plunged through a hedge of raspberry bushes, chased right across a strawberry plantation, and came out on the terrace where the roses grow. There I caught sight of a pink dress and pair of white stockings—that was you! I crawled under a pile of weeds—right into it, you know—into stinging thistles and wet, ill-smelling dirt. And I saw you walking among the roses, and I thought: if it be possible for a robber to get into heaven and dwell with the angels, then it is strange that a cotter's child, here on God's own earth, cannot get into the park and play with the count's daughter.

JULIA [*sentimentally*]. Do you think all poor children have the same thoughts as you had in this case?

JEAN [*hesitatingly at first; then with conviction*]. If all poor—yes—of course. Of course!

JULIA. It must be a dreadful misfortune to be poor.

JEAN [*in a tone of deep distress and with rather exaggerated emphasis*]. Oh, Miss Julia! Oh!— A dog may lie on her ladyship's sofa; a horse may have his nose patted by the young lady's hand, but a servant—[*changing his tone*—oh well, here and there you meet one made of different stuff, and he makes a way for himself in the world, but how often does it happen?— However, do you know what I did? I jumped into the mill brook with my clothes on, and was pulled out, and got a licking. But the next Sunday, when my father and the rest of the people were going over to my grandmother's, I fixed it so that I could stay at home. And then I washed myself with soap and hot water, and put on my best clothes, and went to church, where I could see you. I did see you, and went home determined to die. But I wanted to die beautifully and pleasantly, without any pain. And then I recalled that it was dangerous to sleep under an elder bush. We had a big one that was in full bloom. I

robbed it of all its flowers, and then I put them in the big box where the oats were kept and lay down in them. Did you ever notice the smoothness of oats? Soft to the touch as the skin of the human body! However, I pulled down the lid and closed my eyes—fell asleep and was waked up a very sick boy. But I didn't die, as you can see. What I wanted—that's more than I can tell. Of course, there was not the least hope of winning you—but you symbolised the hopelessness of trying to get out of the class into which I was born.

JULIA. You narrate splendidly, do you know! Did you ever go to school?

JEAN. A little. But I have read a lot of novels and gone to the theatre a good deal. And besides, I have listened to the talk of better-class people, and from that I have learned most of all. -

JULIA. Do you stand around and listen to what we are saying?

JEAN. Of course! And I have heard a lot, too, when I was on the box of the carriage, or rowing the boat. Once I heard you, Miss Julia, and one of your girl friends——

JULIA. Oh!— What was it you heard then?

JEAN. Well, it wouldn't be easy to repeat. But I was rather surprised, and I couldn't understand where you had learned all those words. Perhaps, at bottom, there isn't quite so much difference as they think between one kind of people and another.

JULIA. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! We don't live as you do when we are engaged.

JEAN [*looking hard at her*]. Is it so certain?— Well, Miss Julia, it won't pay to make yourself out so very innocent to me——

JULIA. The man on whom I bestowed my love was a scoundrel.

JEAN. That's what you always say—afterwards.

JULIA. Always?

JEAN. Always, I believe, for I have heard the same words used several times before, on similar occasions.

JULIA. What occasions?

JEAN. Like the one of which we were speaking. The last time——

JULIA [*rising*]. Stop! I don't want to hear any more!

JEAN. Nor did *she*—curiously enough! Well, then I ask permission to go to bed.

JULIA [*gently*]. Go to bed on Midsummer Eve?

JEAN. Yes, for dancing with that mob out there has really no attraction for me.

JULIA. Get the key to the boat and take me out on the lake— I want to watch the sunrise.

JEAN. Would that be wise?

JULIA. It sounds as if you were afraid of your reputation.

JEAN. Why not? I don't care to be made ridiculous, and I don't care to be discharged without a recommendation, for I am trying to get on in the world. And then I feel myself under a certain obligation to Christine.

JULIA. So it's Christine now——

JEAN. Yes, but it's you also— Take my advice and go to bed!

JULIA. Am I to obey you?

JEAN. For once—and for your own sake! The night is far gone. Sleepiness makes us drunk, and the head grows hot. Go to bed! And besides—if I am not mistaken—I can hear the crowd coming this way to look for me. And if we are found together here, you are lost!

CHORUS [*is heard approaching*]:

Through the fields come two ladies a-walking,
Treederee-derallah, treederee-derah.
And one has her shoes full of water,
Treederee-derallah-lah.

They're talking of hundreds of dollars,
Treederee-derallah, treederee-derah.
But have not between them a dollar
Treederee-derallah-lah.

This wreath I give you gladly,
Treederee-derallah, treederee-derah.
But love another madly,
Treederee-derallah-lah.

JULIA. I know the people, and I love them, just as they love me. Let them come, and you'll see.

JEAN. No, Miss Julia, they don't love you. They take your food and spit at your back. Believe me. Listen to me—can't you hear what they are singing?— No, don't pay any attention to it!

JULIA [*listening*]. What is it they are singing?

JEAN. Oh, something scurrilous. About you and me.

JULIA. How infamous! They ought to be ashamed! And the treachery of it!

JEAN. The mob is always cowardly. And in such a fight as this there is nothing to do but to run away.

JULIA. Run away? Where to? We cannot get out. And we cannot go into Christine's room.

JEAN. Oh, we cannot? Well, into my room, then! Necessity knows no law. And you can trust me, for I am your true and frank and respectful friend.

JULIA. But think only—think if they should look for you in there!

JEAN. I shall bolt the door. And if they try to break it open, I'll shoot!— Come! [*Kneeling before her.*] Come!

JULIA [*meaningly*]. And you promise me——?

JEAN. I swear!

MISS JULIA goes quickly out to the right.

JEAN follows her eagerly.

BALLET

The peasants enter. They are decked out in their best and carry flowers in their hats. A fiddler leads them. On the table they place a barrel of small-beer and a keg of "brännvin," or white Swedish whiskey, both of them decorated with wreathes woven out of leaves. First they

drink. Then they form in ring and sing and dance to the melody heard before:

"Through the fields come two ladies a-walking."

The dance finished, they leave singing.

JULIA. [*Enters alone. On seeing the disorder in the kitchen, she claps her hands together. Then she takes out a powder-puff and begins to powder her face.*]

JEAN [*enters in a state of exaltation*]. There you see! And you heard, didn't you? Do you think it possible to stay here?

JULIA. No, I don't think so. But what are we to do?

JEAN. Run away, travel, far away from here.

JULIA. Travel? Yes—but where?

JEAN. To Switzerland, the Italian lakes—you have never been there?

JULIA. No. Is the country beautiful?

JEAN. Oh! Eternal summer! Orange trees! Laurels! Oh!

JULIA. But then—what are we to do down there?

JEAN. I'll start a hotel, everything first class, including the customers?

JULIA. Hotel?

JEAN. That's the life, I tell you! Constantly new faces and new languages. Never a minute free for nerves or brooding. No trouble about what to do—for the work is calling to be done: night and day, bells that ring, trains that whistle, 'busses that come and go; and gold pieces raining on the counter all the time. That's the life for you!

JULIA. Yes, that is life. And I?

JEAN. The mistress of everything, the chief ornament of the house. With your looks—and your manners—oh, success will be assured! Enormous! You'll sit like a queen in the office and keep the slaves going by the touch of an electric button. The guests will pass in review before your throne and timidly deposit their treasures on your table. You cannot imagine how people tremble when a bill is presented to

them—I'll salt the items, and you'll sugar them with your sweetest smiles. Oh, let us get away from here—[*pulling a time-table from his pocket*]*—*at once, with the next train! We'll be in Malmö at 6.30; in Hamburg at 8.40 to-morrow morning; in Frankfort and Basel a day later. And to reach Como by way of the St. Gotthard it will take us—let me see—three days. Three days!

JULIA. All that is all right. But you must give me some courage—Jean. Tell me that you love me. Come and take me in your arms.

JEAN [*reluctantly*]. I should like to—but I don't dare. Not in this house again. I love you—beyond doubt—or, can you doubt it, Miss Julia?

JULIA [*with modesty and true womanly feeling*]. Miss?—Call me Julia. Between us there can be no barriers hereafter. Call me Julia!

JEAN [*disturbed*]. I cannot! There will be barriers between us as long as we stay in this house—there is the past, and there is the count—and I have never met another person for whom I felt such respect. If I only catch sight of his gloves on a chair I feel small. If I only hear that bell up there, I jump like a shy horse. And even now, when I see his boots standing there so stiff and perky, it is as if something made my back bend. [*Kicking at the boots.*] It's nothing but superstition and tradition hammered into us from childhood—but it can be as easily forgotten again. Let us only get to another country, where they have a republic, and you'll see them bend their backs double before my liveried porter. You see, backs have to be bent, but not mine. I wasn't born to that kind of thing. There's better stuff in me—character—and if I only get hold of the first branch, you'll see me do some climbing. To-day I am a valet, but next year I'll be a hotel owner. In ten years I can live on the money I have made, and then I'll go to Roumania and get myself an order. And I may—note well that I say *may*—end my days as a count.

JULIA. Splendid, splendid!

JEAN. Yes, in Roumania the title of count can be had for

cash, and so you'll be a countess after all. My countess!

JULIA. What do I care about all I now cast behind me! Tell me that you love me: otherwise—yes, what am I otherwise?

JEAN. I will tell you so a thousand times—later. But not here. And above all, no sentimentality, or everything will be lost. We must look at the matter in cold blood, like sensible people. [*Takes out a cigar, cuts off the point, and lights it.*] Sit down there now, and I'll sit here, and then we'll talk as if nothing had happened.

JULIA [*in despair*]. Good Lord! Have you then no feelings at all?

JEAN. I? No one is more full of feeling than I am. But I know how to control myself.

JULIA. A while ago you kissed my shoe—and now!

JEAN [*severely*]. Yes, that was then. Now we have other things to think of.

JULIA. Don't speak harshly to me!

JEAN. No, but sensibly. One folly has been committed—don't let us commit any more! The count may be here at any moment, and before he comes our fate must be settled. What do you think of my plans for the future? Do you approve of them?

JULIA. They seem acceptable, on the whole. But there is one question: a big undertaking of that kind will require a big capital—have you got it?

JEAN [*chewing his cigar*]. I? Of course! I have my expert knowledge, my vast experience, my familiarity with several languages. That's the very best kind of capital, I should say.

JULIA. But it won't buy you a railroad ticket even.

JEAN. That's true enough. And that is just why I am looking for a backer to advance the needful cash.

JULIA. Where could you get one all of a sudden?

JEAN. It's for you to find him if you want to become my partner.

JULIA. I cannot do it, and I have nothing myself. [*Pause.*]

JEAN. Well, then that's off——

JULIA. And——

JEAN. Everything remains as before.

JULIA. Do you think I am going to stay under this roof as your concubine? Do you think I'll let the people point their fingers at me? Do you think I can look my father in the face after this? No, take me away from here, from all this humiliation and disgrace!— Oh, what have I done? My God, my God!

[*Breaks into tears.*]

JEAN. So we have got around to that tune now!— What you have done? Nothing but what many others have done before you.

JULIA [*crying hysterically*]. And now you're despising me! —I'm falling, I'm falling!

JEAN. Fall down to me, and I'll lift you up again afterwards.

JULIA. What horrible power drew me to you? Was it the attraction which the strong exercises on the weak—the one who is rising on one who is falling? Or was it love? This—love! Do you know what love is?

JEAN. I? Well, I should say so! Don't you think I have been there before?

JULIA. Oh, the language you use, and the thoughts you think!

JEAN. Well, that's the way I was brought up, and that's the way I am. Don't get nerves now and play the exquisite, for now one of us is just as good as the other. Look here, my girl, let me treat you to a glass of something superfine.

[*He opens the table-drawer, takes out the wine bottle and fills up two glasses that have already been used.*]

JULIA. Where did you get that wine?

JEAN. In the cellar.

JULIA. My father's Burgundy!

JEAN. Well, isn't it good enough for the son-in-law?

JULIA. And I am drinking beer—I!

JEAN. It shows merely that I have better taste than you.

JULIA. Thief!

JEAN. Do you mean to tell on me?

JULIA. Oh, oh! The accomplice of a house thief! Have

I been drunk, or have I been dreaming all this night? Midsummer Eve! The feast of innocent games——

JEAN. Innocent—hm!

JULIA [*walking back and forth*]. Can there be another human being on earth so unhappy as I am at this moment?

JEAN. But why should you be? After such a conquest? Think of Christine in there. Don't you think she has feelings also?

JULIA. I thought so a while ago, but I don't think so any longer. No, a menial is a menial——

JEAN. And a harlot a harlot!

JULIA [*on her knees, with folded hands*]. O God in heaven, make an end of this wretched life! Take me out of the filth into which I am sinking! Save me! Save me!

JEAN. I cannot deny that I feel sorry for you. When I was lying among the onions and saw you up there among the roses—I'll tell you now—I had the same nasty thoughts that all boys have.

JULIA. And you who wanted to die for my sake!

JEAN. Among the oats. That was nothing but talk.

JULIA. Lies in other words!

JEAN [*beginning to feel sleepy*]. Just about. I think I read the story in a paper, and it was about a chimney-sweep who crawled into a wood-box full of lilacs because a girl had brought suit against him for not supporting her kid——

JULIA. So that's the sort you are——

JEAN. Well, I had to think of something—for it's the high-faluting stuff that the women bite on.

JULIA. Scoundrel!

JEAN. Rot!

JULIA. And now you have seen the back of the hawk——

JEAN. Well, I don't know——

JULIA. And I was to be the first branch——

JEAN. But the branch was rotten——

JULIA. I was to be the sign in front of the hotel——

JEAN. And I the hotel——

JULIA. Sit at your counter, and lure your customers, and doctor your bills——

JEAN. No, that I should have done myself——

JULIA. That a human soul can be so steeped in dirt!

JEAN. Well, wash it off!

JULIA. You lackey, you menial, stand up when I talk to you!

JEAN. You lackey-love, you mistress of a menial—shut up and get out of here! You're the right one to come and tell me that I am vulgar. People of my kind would never in their lives act as vulgarly as you have acted to-night. Do you think any servant girl would go for a man as you did? Did you ever see a girl of my class throw herself at anybody in that way? I have never seen the like of it except among beasts and prostitutes.

JULIA [*crushed*]. That's right; strike me, step on me—I haven't deserved any better! I am a wretched creature. But help me! Help me out of this, if there be any way to do so!

JEAN [*in a milder tone*]. I don't want to lower myself by a denial of my share in the honour of seducing. But do you think a person in my place would have dared to raise his eyes to you, if the invitation to do so had not come from yourself? I am still sitting here in a state of utter surprise——

JULIA. And pride——

JEAN. Yes, why not? Although I must confess that the victory was too easy to bring with it any real intoxication.

JULIA. Strike me some more!

JEAN [*rising*]. No! Forgive me instead what I have been saying. I don't want to strike one who is disarmed, and least of all a lady. On one hand I cannot deny that it has given me pleasure to discover that what has dazzled us below is nothing but cat-gold; that the hawk is simply grey on the back also; that there is powder on the tender cheek; that there may be black borders on the polished nails; and that the handkerchief may be dirty, although it smells of perfume. But on the other hand it hurts me to have discovered that what I was striving to reach is neither better nor more genuine. It hurts me to see you sinking so low that you are far beneath your own cook—it hurts me as it hurts to see the

fall flowers beaten down by the rain and turned into mud.

JULIA. You speak as if you were already above me?

JEAN. Well, so I am. Don't you see: I could have made a countess of you, but you could never make me a count.

JULIA. But I am born of a count, and that's more than you can ever achieve.

JEAN. That's true. But I might be the father of counts—if——

JULIA. But you are a thief—and I am not.

JEAN. Thief is not the worst. There are other kinds still farther down. And then, when I serve in a house, I regard myself in a sense as a member of the family, as a child of the house, and you don't call it theft when children pick a few of the berries that load down the vines. [*His passion is aroused once more.*] Miss Julia, you are a magnificent woman, and far too good for one like me. You were swept along by a spell of intoxication, and now you want to cover up your mistake by making yourself believe that you are in love with me. Well, you are not, unless possibly my looks might tempt you—in which case your love is no better than mine. I could never rest satisfied with having you care for nothing in me but the mere animal, and your love I can never win.

JULIA. Are you so sure of that?

JEAN. You mean to say that it might be possible? That I might love you: yes, without doubt—for you are beautiful, refined [*goes up to her and takes hold of her hand*], educated, charming when you want to be so, and it is not likely that the flame will ever burn out in a man who has once been set on fire by you. [*Puts his arm around her waist.*] You are like burnt wine with strong spices in it, and one of your kisses——

[*He tries to lead her away, but she frees herself gently from his hold.*]

JULIA. Leave me alone! In that way you cannot win me.

JEAN. How then?— Not in that way! Not by caresses and sweet words! Not by thought for the future, by escape from disgrace! How then?

JULIA. How? How? I don't know— Not at all! I

hate you as I hate rats, but I cannot escape from you!

JEAN. Escape *with me!*

JULIA [*straightening up*]. Escape? Yes, we must escape!—But I am so tired. Give me a glass of wine.

[*JEAN pours out wine.*]

JULIA [*looks at her watch*]. But we must have a talk first. We have still some time left.

[*Empties her glass and holds it out for more.*]

JEAN. Don't drink so much. It will go to your head.

JULIA. What difference would that make?

JEAN. What difference would it make? It's vulgar to get drunk—What was it you wanted to tell me?

JULIA. We must get away. But first we must have a talk—that is, I must talk, for so far you have done all the talking. You have told me about your life. Now I must tell you about mine, so that we know each other right to the bottom before we begin the journey together.

JEAN. One moment, pardon me! Think first, so that you don't regret it afterwards, when you have already given up the secrets of your life.

JULIA. Are you not my friend?

JEAN. Yes, at times—but don't rely on me.

JULIA. You only talk like that—and besides, my secrets are known to everybody. You see, my mother was not of noble birth, but came of quite plain people. She was brought up in the ideas of her time about equality, and woman's independence, and that kind of thing. And she had a decided aversion to marriage. Therefore, when my father proposed to her, she said she wouldn't marry him—and then she did it just the same. I came into the world—against my mother's wish, I have come to think. Then my mother wanted to bring me up in a perfectly natural state, and at the same time I was to learn everything that a boy is taught, so that I might prove that a woman is just as good as a man. I was dressed as a boy, and was taught how to handle a horse, but could have nothing to do with the cows. I had to groom and harness and go hunting on horseback. I was even forced to learn something about agriculture. And all over the estate men

were set to do women's work, and women to do men's—with the result that everything went to pieces and we became the laughing-stock of the whole neighbourhood. At last my father must have recovered from the spell cast over him, for he rebelled, and everything was changed to suit his own ideas. My mother was taken sick—what kind of sickness it was I don't know, but she fell often into convulsions, and she used to hide herself in the garret or in the garden, and sometimes she stayed out all night. Then came the big fire, of which you have heard. The house, the stable, and the barn were burned down, and this under circumstances which made it look as if the fire had been set on purpose. For the disaster occurred the day after our insurance expired, and the money sent for renewal of the policy had been delayed by the messenger's carelessness, so that it came too late.

[*She fills her glass again and drinks.*]

JEAN. Don't drink any more.

JULIA. Oh, what does it matter!— We were without a roof over our heads and had to sleep in the carriages. My father didn't know where to get money for the rebuilding of the house. Then my mother suggested that he try to borrow from a childhood friend of hers, a brick manufacturer living not far from here. My father got the loan, but was not permitted to pay any interest, which astonished him. And so the house was built up again. [*Drinks again.*] Do you know who set fire to the house?

JEAN. Her ladyship, your mother!

JULIA. Do you know who the brick manufacturer was?

JEAN. Your mother's lover?

JULIA. Do you know to whom the money belonged?

JEAN. Wait a minute—no, that I don't know.

JULIA. To my mother.

JEAN. In other words, to the count, if there was no settlement.

JULIA. There was no settlement. My mother possessed a small fortune of her own which she did not want to leave in my father's control, so she invested it with—her friend.

JEAN. Who copped it.

JULIA. Exactly! He kept it. All this came to my father's knowledge. He couldn't bring suit; he couldn't pay his wife's lover; he couldn't prove that it was his wife's money. That was my mother's revenge because he had made himself master in his own house. At that time he came near shooting himself—it was even rumoured that he had tried and failed. But he took a new lease of life, and my mother had to pay for what she had done. I can tell you that those were five years I'll never forget! My sympathies were with my father, but I took my mother's side because I was not aware of the true circumstances. From her I learned to suspect and hate men—for she hated the whole sex, as you have probably heard—and I promised her on my oath that I would never become a man's slave.

JEAN. And so you became engaged to the County Attorney.

JULIA. Yes, in order that he should be my slave.

JEAN. And he didn't want to?

JULIA. Oh, he wanted, but I wouldn't let him. I got tired of him.

JEAN. Yes, I saw it—in the stable-yard.

JULIA. What did you see?

JEAN. Just that—how he broke the engagement.

JULIA. That's a lie! It was I who broke it. Did he say he did it, the scoundrel?

JEAN. Oh, he was no scoundrel, I guess. So you hate men, Miss Julia?

JULIA. Yes! Most of the time. But now and then—when the weakness comes over me—oh, what shame!

JEAN. And you hate me too?

JULIA. Beyond measure! I should like to kill you like a wild beast——

JEAN. As you make haste to shoot a mad dog. Is that right?

JULIA. That's right!

JEAN. But now there is nothing to shoot with—and there is no dog. What are we to do then?

JULIA. Go abroad.

JEAN. In order to plague each other to death?

JULIA. No—in order to enjoy ourselves: a couple of days, a week, as long as enjoyment is possible. And then—die!

JEAN. Die? How silly! Then I think it's much better to start a hotel.

JULIA [*without listening to JEAN*]. At Lake Como, where the sun is always shining, and the laurels stand green at Christmas, and the oranges are glowing.

JEAN. Lake Como is a rainy hole, and I could see no oranges except in the groceries. But it is a good place for tourists, as it has a lot of villas that can be rented to loving couples, and that's a profitable business—do you know why? Because they take a lease for six months—and then they leave after three weeks.

JULIA [*naïvely*]. Why after three weeks?

JEAN. Because they quarrel, of course. But the rent has to be paid just the same. And then you can rent the house again. And that way it goes on all the time, for there is plenty of love—even if it doesn't last long.

JULIA. You don't want to die with me?

JEAN. I don't want to die at all. Both because I am fond of living, and because I regard suicide as a crime against the Providence which has bestowed life on us.

JULIA. Do you mean to say that *you* believe in God?

JEAN. Of course, I do. And I go to church every other Sunday. Frankly speaking, now I am tired of all this, and now I am going to bed.

JULIA. So! And you think that will be enough for me? Do you know what you owe a woman that you have spoiled?

JEAN [*takes out his purse and throws a silver coin on the table*]. You're welcome! I don't want to be in anybody's debt.

JULIA [*pretending not to notice the insult*]. Do you know what the law provides——

JEAN. Unfortunately the law provides no punishment for a woman who seduces a man.

JULIA [*as before*]. Can you think of any escape except by our going abroad and getting married, and then getting a divorce?

JEAN. Suppose I refuse to enter into this *mésaillance*?

JULIA. *Mésaillance*—

JEAN. Yes, for me. You see, I have better ancestry than you, for nobody in my family was ever guilty of arson.

JULIA. How do you know?

JEAN. Well, nothing is known to the contrary, for we keep no pedigrees—except in the police bureau. But I have read about your pedigree in a book that was lying on the drawing-room table. Do you know who was your first ancestor? A miller who let his wife sleep with the king one night during the war with Denmark. I have no such ancestry. I have none at all, but I can become an ancestor myself.

JULIA. That's what I get for unburdening my heart to one not worthy of it; for sacrificing my family's honour—

JEAN. Dishonour! Well, what was it I told you? You shouldn't drink, for then you talk. And you *must* not talk!

JULIA. Oh, how I regret what I have done! How I regret it! If at least you loved me!

JEAN. For the last time: what do you mean? Am I to weep? Am I to jump over your whip? Am I to kiss you, and lure you down to Lake Como for three weeks, and so on? What am I to do? What do you expect? This is getting to be rather painful! But that's what comes from getting mixed up with women. Miss Julia! I see that you are unhappy; I know that you are suffering; but I cannot understand you. We never carry on like that. There is never any hatred between us. Love is to us a play, and we play at it when our work leaves us time to do so. But we have not the time to do so all day and all night, as you have. I believe you are sick—I am sure you are sick.

JULIA. You should be good to me—and now you speak like a human being.

JEAN. All right, but be human yourself. You spit on me, and then you won't let me wipe myself—on you!

JULIA. Help me, help me! Tell me only what I am to do—where I am to turn?

JEAN. O Lord, if I only knew that myself!

JULIA. I have been exasperated, I have been mad, but there ought to be some way of saving myself.

JEAN. Stay right here and keep quiet. Nobody knows anything.

JULIA. Impossible! The people know, and Christine knows.

JEAN. They don't know, and they would never believe it possible.

JULIA [*hesitating*]. But—it might happen again.

JEAN. That's true.

JULIA. And the results?

JEAN [*frightened*]. The results! Where was my head when I didn't think of that! Well, then there is only one thing to do—you must leave. At once! I can't go with you, for then everything would be lost, so you must go alone—abroad—anywhere!

JULIA. Alone? Where?— I can't do it.

JEAN. You must! And before the count gets back. If you stay, then you know what will happen. Once on the wrong path, one wants to keep on, as the harm is done anyhow. Then one grows more and more reckless—and at last it all comes out. So you must get away! Then you can write to the count and tell him everything, except that it was me. And he would never guess it. Nor do I think he would be very anxious to find out.

JULIA. I'll go if you come with me.

JEAN. Are you stark mad, woman? Miss Julia to run away with her valet! It would be in the papers in another day, and the count could never survive it.

JULIA. I can't leave! I can't stay! Help me! I am so tired, so fearfully tired. Give me orders! Set me going, for I can no longer think, no longer act——

JEAN. Do you see now what good-for-nothings you are! Why do you strut and turn up your noses as if you were the lords of creation? Well, I am going to give you orders. Go up and dress. Get some traveling money, and then come back again.

JULIA [*in an undertone*]. Come up with me!

JEAN. To your room? Now you're crazy again! [*Hesitates a moment.*] No, you must go at once!

[*Takes her by the hand and leads her out.*]

JULIA [*on her way out*]. Can't you speak kindly to me, Jean?

JEAN. An order must always sound unkind. Now you can find out how it feels!

[*JULIA goes out. JEAN, alone, draws a sigh of relief; sits down at the table; takes out a note-book and a pencil; figures aloud from time to time; dumb play until CHRISTINE enters dressed for church; she has a false shirt front and a white tie in one of her hands.*]

CHRISTINE. Goodness gracious, how the place looks! What have you been up to anyhow?

JEAN. Oh, it was Miss Julia who dragged in the people. Have you been sleeping so hard that you didn't hear anything at all?

CHRISTINE. I have been sleeping like a log.

JEAN. And dressed for church already?

CHRISTINE. Yes, didn't you promise to come with me to communion to-day?

JEAN. Oh, yes, I remember now. And there you've got the finery. Well, come on with it. [*Sits down; CHRISTINE helps him to put on the shirt front and the white tie.*]

[*Pause.*]

JEAN [*sleepily*]. What's the text to-day?

CHRISTINE. Oh, about John the Baptist beheaded, I guess.

JEAN. That's going to be a long story, I'm sure. My, but you choke me! Oh, I'm so sleepy, so sleepy!

CHRISTINE. Well, what has been keeping you up all night? Why, man, you're just green in the face!

JEAN. I have been sitting here talking with Miss Julia.

CHRISTINE. She hasn't an idea of what's proper, that creature! [*Pause.*]

JEAN. Say, Christine.

CHRISTINE. Well?

JEAN. Isn't it funny anyhow, when you come to think of it? Her!

CHRISTINE. What is it that's funny?

JEAN. Everything!

[Pause.]

CHRISTINE [*seeing the glasses on the table that are only half emptied*]. So you've been drinking together also?

JEAN. Yes.

CHRISTINE. Shame on you! Look me in the eye!

JEAN. Yes.

CHRISTINE. Is it possible? Is it possible?

JEAN [*after a moment's thought*]. Yes, it is!

CHRISTINE. Ugh! That's worse than I could ever have believed. It's awful!

JEAN. You are not jealous of her, are you?

CHRISTINE. No, not of her. Had it been Clara or Sophie, then I'd have scratched your eyes out. Yes, that's the way I feel about it, and I can't tell why. Oh my, but that was nasty!

JEAN. Are you mad at her then?

CHRISTINE. No, but at you! It was wrong of you, very wrong! Poor girl! No, I tell you, I don't want to stay in this house any longer, with people for whom it is impossible to have any respect.

JEAN. Why should you have any respect for them?

CHRISTINE. And you who are such a smarty can't tell that! You wouldn't serve people who don't act decently, would you? It's to lower oneself, I think.

JEAN. Yes, but it ought to be a consolation to us that they are not a bit better than we.

CHRISTINE. No, I don't think so. For if they're no better, then it's no use trying to get up to them. And just think of the count! Think of him who has had so much sorrow in his day! No, I don't want to stay any longer in this house—And with a fellow like you, too. If it had been the County Attorney—if it had only been some one of her own sort——

JEAN. Now look here!

CHRISTINE. Yes, yes! You're all right in your way, but there's after all some difference between one kind of people and another— No, but this is something I'll never get over!— And the young lady who was so proud, and so tart to the men, that you couldn't believe she would ever let one

come near her—and such a one at that! And she who wanted to have poor Diana shot because she had been running around with the gate-keeper's pug!— Well, I declare!— But I won't stay here any longer, and next October I get out of here.

JEAN. And then?

CHRISTINE. Well, as we've come to talk of that now, perhaps it would be just as well if you looked for something, seeing that we're going to get married after all.

JEAN. Well, what could I look for? As a married man I couldn't get a place like this.

CHRISTINE. No, I understand that. But you could get a job as a janitor, or maybe as a messenger in some government bureau. Of course, the public loaf is always short in weight, but it comes steady, and then there is a pension for the widow and the children——

JEAN [*making a face*]. That's good and well, but it isn't my style to think of dying all at once for the sake of wife and children. I must say that my plans have been looking toward something better than that kind of thing.

CHRISTINE. Your plans, yes—but you've got obligations also, and those you had better keep in mind!

JEAN. Now don't you get my dander up by talking of obligations! I know what I've got to do anyhow. [*Listening for some sound on the outside.*] However, we've plenty of time to think of all this. Go in now and get ready, and then we'll go to church.

CHRISTINE. Who is walking around up there?

JEAN. I don't know, unless it be Clara.

CHRISTINE [*going out*]. It can't be the count, do you think, who's come home without anybody hearing him?

JEAN [*scared*]. The count? No, that isn't possible, for then he would have rung for me.

CHRISTINE [*as she goes out*]. Well, God help us all! Never have I seen the like of it!

[*The sun has risen and is shining on the tree tops in the park. The light changes gradually until it comes slantingly in through the windows. JEAN goes to the door and gives a signal.*]

JULIA. [*Enters in travelling dress and carrying a small bird-cage covered up with a towel; this she places on a chair.*] Now I am ready.

JEAN. Hush! Christine is awake.

JULIA [*showing extreme nervousness during the following scene*]. Did she suspect anything?

JEAN. She knows nothing at all. But, my heavens, how you look!

JULIA. How do I look?

JEAN. You're as pale as a corpse, and—pardon me, but your face is dirty.

JULIA. Let me wash it then— Now! [*She goes over to the washstand and washes her face and hands.*] Give me a towel— Oh!— That's the sun rising!

JEAN. And then the ogre bursts.

JULIA. Yes, ogres and trolls were abroad last night!— But listen, Jean. Come with me, for now I have the money.

JEAN [*doubtfully*]. Enough?

JULIA. Enough to start with. Come with me, for I cannot travel alone to-day. Think of it—Midsummer Day, on a stuffy train, jammed with people who stare at you—and standing still at stations when you want to fly. No, I cannot! I cannot! And then the memories will come: childhood memories of Midsummer Days, when the inside of the church was turned into a green forest—birches and lilacs; the dinner at the festive table with relatives and friends; the afternoon in the park, with dancing and music, flowers and games! Oh, you may run and run, but your memories are in the baggage-car, and with them remorse and repentance!

JEAN. I'll go with you—but at once, before it's too late. This very moment!

JULIA. Well, get dressed then. [*Picks up the cage.*]

JEAN. But no baggage! That would only give us away.

JULIA. No, nothing at all! Only what we can take with us in the car.

JEAN [*has taken down his hat*]. What have you got there? What is it?

JULIA. It's only my finch. I can't leave it behind.

JEAN. Did you ever! Dragging a bird-cage along with us! You must be raving mad! Drop the cage!

JULIA. The only thing I take with me from my home! The only living creature that loves me since Diana deserted me! Don't be cruel! Let me take it along!

JEAN. Drop the cage, I tell you! And don't talk so loud—Christine can hear us.

JULIA. No, I won't let it fall into strange hands. I'd rather have you kill it!

JEAN. Well, give it to me, and I'll wring its neck.

JULIA. Yes, but don't hurt it. Don't—no, I cannot!

JEAN. Let me—I can!

JULIA. [*Takes the bird out of the cage and kisses it.*] Oh, my little birdie, must it die and go away from its mistress!

JEAN. Don't make a scene, please. Don't you know it's a question of your life, of your future? Come, quick!

[*Snatches the bird away from her, carries it to the chopping-block and picks up an axe. MISS JULIA turns away.*]

JEAN. You should have learned how to kill chickens instead of shooting with a revolver—[*brings down the axe*—then you wouldn't have fainted for a drop of blood.

JULIA [*screaming*]. Kill me too! Kill me! You who can take the life of an innocent creature without turning a hair! Oh, I hate and despise you! There is blood between us! Cursed be the hour when I first met you! Cursed be the hour when I came to life in my mother's womb!

JEAN. Well, what's the use of all that cursing? Come on!

JULIA [*approaching the chopping-block as if drawn to it against her will*]. No, I don't want to go yet. I cannot—I must see— Hush! There's a carriage coming up the road. [*Listening without taking her eyes off the block and the axe.*] You think I cannot stand the sight of blood. You think I am as weak as that—oh, I should like to see your blood, your brains, on that block there. I should like to see your whole sex swimming in blood like that thing there. I think I could drink out of your skull, and bathe my feet in your open

breast, and eat your heart from the spit!— You think I am weak; you think I love you; you think I want to carry your offspring under my heart and nourish it with my blood—bear your children and take your name! Tell me, you, what are you called anyhow? I have never heard your family name—and maybe you haven't any. I should become Mrs. "Hovel," or Mrs. "Backyard"—you dog there, that's wearing my collar; you lackey with my coat of arms on your buttons—and I should share with my cook, and be the rival of my own servant. Oh! Oh! Oh!— You think I am a coward and want to run away! No, now I'll stay—and let the lightning strike! My father will come home—will find his chiffonier opened—the money gone! Then he'll ring—twice for the ~~valet~~^{your}—and then he'll send for the sheriff—and then I shall tell everything! Everything! Oh, but it will be good to get an end to it—if it only be the end! And then his heart will break, and he dies!— So there will be an end to all of us—and all will be quiet—peace—eternal rest!— And then the coat of arms will be shattered on the coffin—and the count's line will be wiped out—but the lackey's line goes on in the orphan asylum—wins laurels in the gutter, and ends in jail.

JEAN. There spoke the royal blood! Bravo, Miss Julia! Now you put the miller back in his sack!

[CHRISTINE enters dressed for church and carrying a hymn-book in her hand.]

JULIA [*hurries up to her and throws herself into her arms as if seeking protection*]. Help me, Christine! Help me against this man!

CHRISTINE [*unmoved and cold*]. What kind of performance is this on the Sabbath morning? [*Catches sight of the chopping-block.*] My, what a mess you have made!— What's the meaning of all this? And the way you shout and carry on!

JULIA. You are a woman, Christine, and you are my friend. Beware of that scoundrel!

JEAN [*a little shy and embarrassed*]. While the ladies are

discussing I'll get myself a shave. *[Slinks out to the right.]*

JULIA. You must understand me, and you must listen to me.

CHRISTINE. No, really, I don't understand this kind of trolloping. Where are you going in your travelling-dress—and he with his hat on—what?—What?

JULIA. Listen, Christine, listen, and I'll tell you everything—

CHRISTINE. I don't want to know anything—

JULIA. You must listen to me—

CHRISTINE. What is it about? Is it about this nonsense with Jean? Well, I don't care about it at all, for it's none of my business. But if you're planning to get him away with you, we'll put a stop to that!

JULIA *[extremely nervous]*. Please try to be quiet, Christine, and listen to me. I cannot stay here, and Jean cannot stay here—and so we must leave—

CHRISTINE. Hm, hm!

JULIA *[brightening up]*. But now I have got an idea, you know. Suppose all three of us should leave—go abroad—go to Switzerland and start a hotel together—I have money, you know—and Jean and I could run the whole thing—and you, I thought, could take charge of the kitchen—Wouldn't that be fine!—Say yes, now! And come along with us! Then everything is fixed!—Oh, say yes!

[She puts her arms around CHRISTINE and pats her.]

CHRISTINE *[coldly and thoughtfully]*. Hm, hm!

JULIA *[presto tempo]*. You have never travelled, Christine—you must get out and have a look at the world. You cannot imagine what fun it is to travel on a train—constantly new people—new countries—and then we get to Hamburg and take in the Zoölogical Gardens in passing—that's what you like—and then we go to the theatres and to the opera—and when we get to Munich, there, you know, we have a lot of museums, where they keep Rubens and Raphael and all those big painters, you know—Haven't you heard of Munich, where King Louis used to live—the king, you know, that went mad—And then we'll have a look at his castle—

he has still some castles that are furnished just as in a fairy tale—and from there it isn't very far to Switzerland—and the Alps, you know—just think of the Alps, with snow on top of them in the middle of the summer—and there you have orange trees and laurels that are green all the year around—

[JEAN is seen in the right wing, sharpening his razor on a strop which he holds between his teeth and his left hand; he listens to the talk with a pleased mien and nods approval now and then.]

JULIA [*tempo prestissimo*]. And then we get a hotel—and I sit in the office, while Jean is outside receiving tourists—and goes out marketing—and writes letters— That's a life for you— Then the train whistles, and the 'bus drives up, and it rings upstairs, and it rings in the restaurant—and then I make out the bills—and I am going to salt them, too— You can never imagine how timid tourists are when they come to pay their bills! And you—you will sit like a queen in the kitchen. Of course, you are not going to stand at the stove yourself. And you'll have to dress neatly and nicely in order to show yourself to people—and with your looks—yes, I am not flattering you—you'll catch a husband some fine day—some rich Englishman, you know—for those fellows are so easy [*slowing down*] to catch—and then we grow rich—and we build us a villa at Lake Como—of course, it is raining a little in that place now and then—but [*limply*] the sun must be shining sometimes—although it looks dark—and—then—or else we can go home again—and come back—here—or some other place—

CHRISTINE. Tell me, Miss Julia, do you believe in all that yourself?

JULIA [*crushed*]. Do I believe in it myself?

CHRISTINE. Yes.

JULIA [*exhausted*]. I don't know: I believe no longer in anything. [*She sinks down on the bench and drops her head between her arms on the table.*] Nothing! Nothing at all!

CHRISTINE [*turns to the right, where JEAN is standing*]. So you were going to run away!

JEAN [*abashed, puts the razor on the table*]. Run away? Well, that's putting it rather strong. You have heard what the young lady proposes, and though she is tired out now by being up all night, it's a proposition that can be put through all right.

CHRISTINE. Now you tell me: did you mean me to act as cook for that one there——?

JEAN [*sharply*]. Will you please use decent language in speaking to your mistress! Do you understand?

CHRISTINE. Mistress!

JEAN. Yes!

CHRISTINE. Well, well! Listen to him!

JEAN. Yes, it would be better for you to listen a little more and talk a little less. Miss Julia is your mistress, and what makes you disrespectful to her now should make you feel the same way about yourself.

CHRISTINE. Oh, I have always had enough respect for myself——

JEAN. To have none for others!

CHRISTINE. —not to go below my own station. You can't say that the count's cook has had anything to do with the groom or the swineherd. You can't say anything of the kind!

JEAN. Yes, it's your luck that you have had to do with a gentleman.

CHRISTINE. Yes, a gentleman who sells the oats out of the count's stable!

JEAN. What's that to you who get a commission on the groceries and bribes from the butcher?

CHRISTINE. What's that?

JEAN. And so you can't respect your master and mistress any longer! You—you!

CHRISTINE. Are you coming with me to church? I think you need a good sermon on top of such a deed.

JEAN. No, I am not going to church to-day. You can go by yourself and confess your own deeds.

CHRISTINE. Yes, I'll do that, and I'll bring back enough forgiveness to cover you also. The Saviour suffered and died on the cross for all our sins, and if we go to him with a be-

lieving heart and a repentent mind, he'll take all our guilt on himself.

JULIA. Do you believe that, Christine?

CHRISTINE. It is my living belief, as sure as I stand here, and the faith of my childhood which I have kept since I was young, Miss Julia. And where sin abounds, grace abounds too.

JULIA. Oh, if I had your faith! Oh, if——

CHRISTINE. Yes, but you don't get it without the special grace of God, and that is not bestowed on everybody——

JULIA. On whom is it bestowed then?

CHRISTINE. That's just the great secret of the work of grace, Miss Julia, and the Lord has no regard for persons, but there those that are last shall be the foremost——

JULIA. Yes, but that means he has regard for those that are last.

CHRISTINE [*going right on*]. —and it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to get into heaven. That's the way it is, Miss Julia. Now I am going, however—alone—and as I pass by, I'll tell the stableman not to let out the horses if anybody should like to get away before the count comes home. Good-bye! [*Goes out.*]

JEAN. Well, ain't she a devil!— And all this for the sake of a finch!

JULIA [*apathetically*]. Never mind the finch!— Can you see any way out of this, any way to end it?

JEAN [*ponders*]. No!

JULIA. What would you do in my place?

JEAN. In your place? Let me see. As one of gentle birth, as a woman, as one who has—fallen. I don't know—yes, I do know!

JULIA [*picking up the razor with a significant gesture*]. Like this?

JEAN. Yes!— But please observe that I myself wouldn't do it, for there is a difference between us.

JULIA. Because you are a man and I a woman? What is the difference?

JEAN. It is the same—as—that between man and woman.

JULIA [*with the razor in her hand*]. I want to, but I cannot!— My father couldn't either, that time he should have done it.

JEAN. No, he should not have done it, for he had to get his revenge first.

JULIA. And now it is my mother's turn to revenge herself again, through me.

JEAN. Have you not loved your father, Miss Julia?

JULIA. Yes, immensely, but I must have hated him, too. I think I must have been doing so without being aware of it. But he was the one who reared me in contempt for my own sex—half woman and half man! Whose fault is it, this that has happened? My father's—my mother's—my own? My own? Why, I have nothing that is my own. I haven't a thought that didn't come from my father; not a passion that didn't come from my mother; and now this last—this about all human creatures being equal—I got that from him, my fiancé—whom I call a scoundrel for that reason! How can it be my own fault? To put the blame on Jesus, as Christine does—no, I am too proud for that, and know too much—thanks to my father's teachings— And that about a rich person not getting into heaven, it's just a lie, and Christine, who has money in the savings-bank, wouldn't get in anyhow. Whose is the fault?— What does it matter whose it is? For just the same I am the one who must bear the guilt and the results——

JEAN. Yes, but——

[*Two sharp strokes are rung on the bell. MISS JULIA leaps to her feet. JEAN changes his coat.*]

JEAN. The count is back. Think if Christine——

[*Goes to the speaking-tube, knocks on it, and listens.*]

JULIA. Now he has been to the chiffonier!

JEAN. It is Jean, your lordship! [*Listening again, the spectators being unable to hear what the count says.*] Yes, your lordship! [*Listening.*] Yes, your lordship! At once! [*Listening.*] In a minute, your lordship! [*Listening.*] Yes, yes! In half an hour!

JULIA [*with intense concern*]. What did he say? Lord Jesus, what did he say?

JEAN. He called for his boots and wanted his coffee in half an hour.

JULIA. In half an hour then! Oh, I am so tired. I can't do anything; can't repent, can't run away, can't stay, can't live—can't die! Help me now! Command me, and I'll obey you like a dog! Do me this last favour—save my honour, and save his name! You know what my will ought to do, and what it cannot do—now give me your will, and make me do it!

JEAN. I don't know why—but now I can't either—I don't understand— It is just as if this coat here made a—I cannot command you—and now, since I've heard the count's voice—now—I can't quite explain it—but— Oh, that damned menial is back in my spine again. I believe if the count should come down here, and if he should tell me to cut my own throat—I'd do it on the spot!

JULIA. Make believe that you are he, and that I am you!—You did some fine acting when you were on your knees before me—then you were the nobleman—or—have you ever been to a show and seen one who could hypnotize people?

[JEAN *makes a sign of assent.*]

JULIA. He says to his subject: get the broom. And the man gets it. He says: sweep. And the man sweeps.

JEAN. But then the other person must be asleep.

JULIA [*ecstatically*]. I am asleep already—there is nothing in the whole room but a lot of smoke—and you look like a stove—that looks like a man in black clothes and a high hat—and your eyes glow like coals when the fire is going out—and your face is a lump of white ashes. [*The sunlight has reached the floor and is now falling on JEAN.*] How warm and nice it is! [*She rubs her hands as if warming them before a fire.*] And so light—and so peaceful!

JEAN [*takes the razor and puts it in her hand*]. There's the broom! Go now, while it is light—to the barn—and——

[*Whispers something in her ear.*]

JULIA [*awake*]. Thank you! Now I shall have rest! But

tell me first—that the foremost also receive the gift of grace. Say it, even if you don't believe it.

JEAN. The foremost? No, I can't do that!— But wait— Miss Julia—I know! You are no longer among the foremost—now when you are among the—last!

JULIA. That's right. I am among the last of all: I am the very last. Oh!— But now I cannot go— Tell me once more that I must go!

JEAN. No, now I can't do it either. I cannot!

JULIA. And those that are foremost shall be the last.

JEAN. Don't think, don't think! Why, you are taking away my strength, too, so that I become a coward— What? I thought I saw the bell moving!— To be that scared of a bell! Yes, but it isn't only the bell—there is somebody behind it—a hand that makes it move—and something else that makes the hand move—but if you cover up your ears— just cover up your ears! Then it rings worse than ever! Rings and rings, until you answer it—and then it's too late— then comes the sheriff—and then—

[*Two quick rings from the bell.*]

JEAN [*shrinks together; then he straightens himself up*]. It's horrid! But there's no other end to it!— Go!

[*JULIA goes firmly out through the door.*]

THE INTRUDER

(1890)

BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK

CHARACTERS

THE THREE DAUGHTERS.

THE GRANDFATHER.

THE FATHER.

THE UNCLE.

THE SERVANT.

THE INTRUDER

A dimly lighted room in an old country-house. A door on the right, a door on the left, and a small concealed door in a corner. At the back, stained-glass windows, in which the colour green predominates, and a glass door opening on to a terrace. A Dutch clock in one corner. A lamp lighted.

THE THREE DAUGHTERS. Come here, grandfather. Sit down under the lamp.

THE GRANDFATHER. There does not seem to me to be much light here.

THE FATHER. Shall we go on to the terrace, or stay in this room?

THE UNCLE. Would it not be better to stay here? It has rained the whole week, and the nights are damp and cold.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Still the stars are shining.

THE UNCLE. Ah! stars—that's nothing.

THE GRANDFATHER. We had better stay here. One never knows what may happen.

THE FATHER. There is no longer any cause for anxiety. The danger is past, and she is saved . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. I fancy she is not going on well . . .

THE FATHER. Why do you say that?

THE GRANDFATHER. I have heard her speak.

THE FATHER. But the doctors assure us we may be easy . . .

THE UNCLE. You know quite well that your father-in-law likes to alarm us needlessly.

THE GRANDFATHER. I don't look at these things as you others do.

THE UNCLE. You ought to rely on us, then, who can see.

She looked very well this afternoon. She is sleeping quietly now; and we are not going to spoil, without any reason, the first comfortable evening that luck has thrown in our way. . . . It seems to me we have a perfect right to be easy, and even to laugh a little, this evening, without apprehension.

THE FATHER. That's true; this is the first time I have felt at home with my family since this terrible confinement.

THE UNCLE. When once illness has come into a house, it is as though a stranger had forced himself into the family circle.

THE FATHER. And then you understood, too, that you should count on no one outside the family.

THE UNCLE. You are quite right.

THE GRANDFATHER. Why could I not see my poor daughter to-day?

THE UNCLE. You know quite well—the doctor forbade it.

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not know what to think . . .

THE UNCLE. It is absurd to worry.

THE GRANDFATHER [*pointing to the door on the left*]. She cannot hear us?

THE FATHER. We shall not talk too loud; besides, the door is very thick, and the Sister of Mercy is with her, and she is sure to warn us if we are making too much noise.

THE GRANDFATHER [*pointing to the door on the right*]. He cannot hear us?

THE FATHER. No, no.

THE GRANDFATHER. He is asleep.

THE FATHER. I suppose so.

THE GRANDFATHER. Some one had better go and see.

THE UNCLE. The little one would cause *me* more anxiety than your wife. It is now several weeks since he was born, and he has scarcely stirred. He has not cried once all the time! He is like a wax doll.

THE GRANDFATHER. I think he will be deaf—dumb too, perhaps—the usual result of a marriage between cousins . . .

[*A reproofing silence.*]

THE FATHER. I could almost wish him ill for the suffering he has caused his mother.

THE UNCLE. Do be reasonable; it is not the poor little thing's fault. He is quite alone in the room?

THE FATHER. Yes; the doctor does not wish him to stay in his mother's room any longer.

THE UNCLE. But the nurse is with him?

THE FATHER. No; she has gone to rest a little; she has well deserved it these last few days. Ursula, just go and see if he is asleep.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Yes, father.

[The Three Sisters get up, and go into the room on the right, hand in hand.]

THE FATHER. When will your sister come?

THE UNCLE. I think she will come about nine.

THE FATHER. It is past nine. I hope she will come this evening; my wife is so anxious to see her.

THE UNCLE. She is certain to come. This will be the first time she has been here?

THE FATHER. She has never been into the house.

THE UNCLE. It is very difficult for her to leave her convent.

THE FATHER. Will she be alone?

THE UNCLE. I expect one of the nuns will come with her. They are not allowed to go out alone.

THE FATHER. But she is the Superior.

THE UNCLE. The rule is the same for all.

THE GRANDFATHER. Do you not feel anxious?

THE UNCLE. Why should we feel anxious? What's the good of harping on that? There is nothing more to fear.

THE GRANDFATHER. Your sister is older than you?

THE UNCLE. She is the eldest of us all.

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not know what ails me; I feel uneasy. I wish your sister were here.

THE UNCLE. She will come; she promised to.

THE GRANDFATHER. I wish this evening were over!

[The Three Daughters come in again.]

THE FATHER. He is asleep?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Yes, father; very sound.

THE UNCLE. What shall we do while we are waiting?

THE GRANDFATHER. Waiting for what?

THE UNCLE. Waiting for our sister.

THE FATHER. You see no one coming, Ursula?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER [*at the window*]. No one, father.

THE FATHER. Not in the avenue? Can you see the avenue?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, father; it is moonlight, and I can see the avenue as far as the cypress wood.

THE GRANDFATHER. And you do not see any one?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, grandfather.

THE UNCLE. What sort of a night is it?

THE DAUGHTER. Very fine. Do you hear the nightingales?

THE UNCLE. Yes, yes.

THE DAUGHTER. A little wind is rising in the avenue.

THE GRANDFATHER. A little wind in the avenue?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes; the trees are trembling a little.

THE UNCLE. I am surprised that my sister is not here yet.

THE GRANDFATHER. I cannot hear the nightingales any longer.

THE DAUGHTER. I think some one has come into the garden, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. Who is it?

THE DAUGHTER. I do not know; I can see no one.

THE UNCLE. Because there is no one there.

THE DAUGHTER. There must be some one in the garden; the nightingales have suddenly ceased singing.

THE GRANDFATHER. But I do not hear any one coming.

THE DAUGHTER. Some one must be passing by the pond, because the swans are frightened.

ANOTHER DAUGHTER. All the fishes in the pond are diving suddenly.

THE FATHER. You cannot see any one?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, father.

THE FATHER. But the pond lies in the moonlight . . .

THE DAUGHTER. Yes; I can see that the swans are frightened.

THE UNCLE. I am sure it is my sister who is frightening them. She must have come in by the little gate.

THE FATHER. I cannot understand why the dogs do not bark.

THE DAUGHTER. I can see the watch-dog right at the back of his kennel. The swans are crossing to the other bank! . . .

THE UNCLE. They are afraid of my sister. I will go and see. [*He calls.*] Sister! sister! Is that you? . . . There is no one there.

THE DAUGHTER. I am sure that some one has come into garden. You will see.

THE UNCLE. But she would answer me!

THE GRANDFATHER. Are not the nightingales beginning to sing again, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. I cannot hear one anywhere.

THE GRANDFATHER. And yet there is no noise.

THE FATHER. There is a silence of the grave.

THE GRANDFATHER. It must be some stranger that frightened them, for if it were one of the family they would not be silent.

THE UNCLE. How much longer are you going to discuss these nightingales?

THE GRANDFATHER. Are all the windows open, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. The glass door is open, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. It seems to me that the cold is penetrating into the room.

THE DAUGHTER. There is a little wind in the garden, grandfather, and the rose-leaves are falling.

THE FATHER. Well, shut the door. It is late.

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, father . . . I cannot shut the door.

THE TWO OTHER DAUGHTERS. We cannot shut the door.

THE GRANDFATHER. Why, what is the matter with the door, my children?

THE UNCLE. You need not say that in such an extraordinary voice. I will go and help them.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. We cannot manage to shut it quite.

THE UNCLE. It is because of the damp. Let us all push together. There must be something in the way.

THE FATHER. The carpenter will set it right to-morrow.

THE GRANDFATHER. Is the carpenter coming to-morrow?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather; he is coming to do some work in the cellar.

THE GRANDFATHER. He will make a noise in the house.

THE DAUGHTER. I will tell him to work quietly.

[*Suddenly the sound of a scythe being sharpened is heard outside.*]

THE GRANDFATHER [*with a shudder*]. Oh!

THE UNCLE. What is that?

THE DAUGHTER. I don't quite know; I think it is the gardener. I cannot quite see; he is in the shadow of the house.

THE FATHER. It is the gardener going to mow.

THE UNCLE. He mows by night?

THE FATHER. Is not to-morrow Sunday?—Yes.—I noticed that the grass was very long round the house.

THE GRANDFATHER. It seems to me that his scythe makes as much noise . . .

THE DAUGHTER. He is mowing near the house.

THE GRANDFATHER. Can you see him, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. No, grandfather. He stands in the dark.

THE GRANDFATHER. I am afraid he will wake my daughter.

THE UNCLE. We can scarcely hear him.

THE GRANDFATHER. It sounds to me as if he were mowing inside the house.

THE UNCLE. The invalid will not hear it; there is no danger.

THE FATHER. It seems to me that the lamp is not burning well this evening.

THE UNCLE. It wants filling.

THE FATHER. I saw it filled this morning. It has burnt badly since the window was shut.

THE UNCLE. I fancy the chimney is dirty.

THE FATHER. It will burn better presently.

THE DAUGHTER. Grandfather is asleep. He has not slept for three nights.

THE FATHER. He has been so much worried.

THE UNCLE. He always worries too much. At times he will not listen to reason.

THE FATHER. It is quite excusable at his age.

THE UNCLE. God knows what we shall be like at his age!

THE FATHER. He is nearly eighty.

THE UNCLE. Then he has a right to be strange.

THE FATHER. He is like all blind people.

THE UNCLE. They think too much.

THE FATHER. They have too much time to spare.

THE UNCLE. They have nothing else to do.

THE FATHER. And, besides, they have no distractions.

THE UNCLE. That must be terrible.

THE FATHER. Apparently one gets used to it.

THE UNCLE. I cannot imagine it.

THE FATHER. They are certainly to be pitied.

THE UNCLE. 'Not to know where one is, not to know where one has come from, not to know whither one is going, not to be able to distinguish midday from midnight, or summer from winter—and always darkness, darkness! I would rather not live. Is it absolutely incurable?

THE FATHER. Apparently so.

THE UNCLE. But he is not absolutely blind?

THE FATHER. He can perceive a strong light.

THE UNCLE. Let us take care of our poor eyes.

THE FATHER. He often has strange ideas.

THE UNCLE. At times he is not at all amusing.

THE FATHER. He says absolutely everything he thinks.

THE UNCLE. But he was not always like this?

THE FATHER. No; once he was as rational as we are; he never said anything extraordinary. I am afraid Ursula encourages him a little too much; she answers all his questions . . .

THE UNCLE. It would be better not to answer them. It's a mistaken kindness to him. [*Ten o'clock strikes.*]

THE GRANDFATHER [*waking up*]. Am I facing the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER. You have had a nice sleep, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER. Am I facing the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. There is nobody at the glass door?

THE DAUGHTER. No, grandfather; I do not see any one.

THE GRANDFATHER. I thought some one was waiting. No one has come?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER [*to the Uncle and Father*]. And your sister has not come?

THE UNCLE. It is too late; she will not come now. It is not nice of her.

THE FATHER. I'm beginning to be anxious about her.

[*A noise, as of some one coming into the house.*]

THE UNCLE. She is here! Did you hear?

THE FATHER. Yes; some one has come in at the basement.

THE UNCLE. It must be our sister. I recognized her step.

THE GRANDFATHER. I heard slow footsteps.

THE FATHER. She came in very quietly.

THE UNCLE. She knows there is an invalid.

THE GRANDFATHER. I hear nothing now.

THE UNCLE. She will come up directly; they will tell her we are here.

THE FATHER. I am glad she has come.

THE UNCLE. I was sure she would come this evening.

THE GRANDFATHER. She is a very long time coming up.

THE UNCLE. However, it must be she.

THE FATHER. We are not expecting any other visitors.

THE GRANDFATHER. I cannot hear any noise in the basement.

THE FATHER. I will call the servant. We shall know how things stand.

[*He pulls a bell-rope.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. I can hear a noise on the stairs already.

THE FATHER. It is the servant coming up.

THE GRANDFATHER. It sounds to me as if she were not alone.

THE FATHER. She is coming up slowly . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. I hear your sister's step!

THE FATHER. I can only hear the servant.

THE GRANDFATHER. It is your sister! It is your sister!

[*There is a knock at the little door.*]

THE UNCLE. She is knocking at the door of the back stairs.

THE FATHER. I will go and open myself. [*He partly opens the little door; the Servant remains outside in the opening.*] Where are you?

THE SERVANT. Here, sir.

THE GRANDFATHER. Your sister is at the door?

THE UNCLE. I can see only the servant.

THE FATHER. It is only the servant. [*To the Servant.*]

Who was that, that came into the house?

THE SERVANT. Came into the house?

THE FATHER. Yes; some one came in just now?

THE SERVANT. No one came in, sir.

THE GRANDFATHER. Who is it sighing like that?

THE UNCLE. It is the servant; she is out of breath.

THE GRANDFATHER. Is she crying?

THE UNCLE. No; why should she be crying?

THE FATHER [*to the Servant*]. No one came in just now?

THE SERVANT. No, sir.

THE FATHER. But we heard some one open the door!

THE SERVANT. It was I shutting the door.

THE FATHER. It was open?

THE SERVANT. Yes, sir.

THE FATHER. Why was it open at this time of night?

THE SERVANT. I do not know, sir. I had shut it myself.

THE FATHER. Then who was it that opened it?

THE SERVANT. I do not know, sir. Some one must have gone out after me, sir . . .

THE FATHER. You must be careful.—Don't push the door; you know what a noise it makes!

THE SERVANT. But, sir, I am not touching the door.

THE FATHER. But you are. You are pushing as if you were trying to get into the room.

THE SERVANT. But, sir, I am three yards away from the door.

THE FATHER. Don't talk so loud . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. Are they putting out the light?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. No, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. It seems to me it has grown pitch dark all at once.

THE FATHER [*to the Servant*]. You can go down again now; but do not make so much noise on the stairs.

THE SERVANT. I did not make any noise on the stairs.

THE FATHER. I tell you that you did make a noise. Go down quietly; you will wake your mistress. And if any one comes now, say that we are not at home.

THE UNCLE. Yes; say that we are not at home.

THE GRANDFATHER [*shuddering*]. You must not say that!

THE FATHER. . . . Except to my sister and the doctor.

THE UNCLE. When will the doctor come?

THE FATHER. He will not be able to come before midnight.

[*He shuts the door. A clock is heard striking eleven.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. She has come in?

THE FATHER. Who?

THE GRANDFATHER. The servant.

THE FATHER. No, she has gone downstairs.

THE GRANDFATHER. I thought that she was sitting at the table.

THE UNCLE. The servant?

THE GRANDFATHER. Yes. No one has come into the room?

THE FATHER. No; no one has come in.

THE GRANDFATHER. And your sister is not here?

THE UNCLE. Our sister has not come.

THE GRANDFATHER. You want to deceive me.

THE UNCLE. Deceive you?

THE GRANDFATHER. Ursula, tell me the truth, for the love of God!

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Grandfather! Grandfather! what is the matter with you?

THE GRANDFATHER. Something has happened! I am sure my daughter is worse! . . .

THE UNCLE. Are you dreaming?

THE GRANDFATHER. You do not want to tell me! . . . I can see quite well there is something . . .

THE UNCLE. In that case you can see better than we can.

THE GRANDFATHER. Ursula, tell me the truth!

THE DAUGHTER. But we have told you the truth, grandfather!

THE GRANDFATHER. You do not speak in your ordinary voice.

THE FATHER. That is because you frighten her.

THE GRANDFATHER. Your voice is changed too.

THE FATHER. You are going mad!

[He and the Uncle make signs to each other to signify that the Grandfather has lost his reason.]

THE GRANDFATHER. I can hear quite well that you are afraid.

THE FATHER. But what should we be afraid of?

THE GRANDFATHER. Why do you want to deceive me?

THE UNCLE. Who is thinking of deceiving you?

THE GRANDFATHER. Why have you put out the light?

THE UNCLE. But the light has not been put out; there is as much light as there was before.

THE DAUGHTER. It seems to me that the lamp has gone down.

THE FATHER. I see as well now as ever.

THE GRANDFATHER. I have millstones on my eyes! Tell me, girls, what is going on here! Tell me, for the love of God, who you can see! I am here, all alone, in darkness without end! I do not know who seats himself beside me! I do not know what is happening a yard from me! . . . Why were you talking under your breath just now?

THE FATHER. No one was talking under his breath.

THE GRANDFATHER. You did talk in a low voice at the door.

THE FATHER. You heard all I said.

THE GRANDFATHER. You brought some one into the room! . . .

THE FATHER. But I tell you no one has come in!

THE GRANDFATHER. Is it your sister or a priest?—You should not try to deceive me.—Ursula, who was it that came in?

THE DAUGHTER. No one, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. You must not try to deceive me; I know what I know.—How many of us are there here?

THE DAUGHTER. There are six of us round the table, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. You are all round the table?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. You are there, Paul?

THE FATHER. Yes.

THE GRANDFATHER. You are there, Oliver?

THE UNCLE. Yes, of course I am here, in my usual place. That's not alarming, is it?

THE GRANDFATHER. You are there, Geneviève?

ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS. Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. You are there, Gertrude?

ANOTHER DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. You are here, Ursula?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather; next to you.

THE GRANDFATHER. And who is that sitting there?

THE DAUGHTER. Where do you mean, grandfather?—There is no one.

THE GRANDFATHER. There, there—in the midst of us!

THE DAUGHTER. But there is no one, grandfather!

THE FATHER. We tell you there is no one!

THE GRANDFATHER. But you cannot see—any of you!

THE UNCLE. Pshaw! You are joking?

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not feel inclined for joking, I can assure you.

THE UNCLE. Then believe those who can see.

THE GRANDFATHER [*undecidedly*]. I thought there was some one . . . I believe I shall not live long . . .

THE UNCLE. Why should we deceive you? What use would there be in that?

THE FATHER. It would be our duty to tell you the truth . . .

THE UNCLE. What would be the good of deceiving each other?

THE FATHER. You could not live in error long.

THE GRANDFATHER [*trying to rise*]. I should like to pierce this darkness! . . .

THE FATHER. Where do you want to go?

THE GRANDFATHER. Over there . . .

THE FATHER. Don't be so anxious . . .

THE UNCLE. You are strange this evening.

THE GRANDFATHER. It is all of you who seem to me to be strange!

THE FATHER. Do you want anything? . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not know what ails me.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. Grandfather! grandfather! What do you want, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER. Give me your little hands, my children.

THE THREE DAUGHTERS. Yes, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. Why are you all three trembling, girls?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. We are scarcely trembling at all, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. I fancy you are all three pale.

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. It is late, grandfather, and we are tired.

THE FATHER. You must go to bed, and grandfather himself would do well to take a little rest.

THE GRANDFATHER. I could not sleep to-night!

THE UNCLE. We will wait for the doctor.

THE GRANDFATHER. Prepare me for the truth.

THE UNCLE. But there is no truth!

THE GRANDFATHER. Then I do not know what there is!

THE UNCLE. I tell you there is nothing at all!

THE GRANDFATHER. I wish I could see my poor daughter!

THE FATHER. But you know quite well it is impossible; she must not be awaked unnecessarily.

THE UNCLE. You will see her to-morrow.

THE GRANDFATHER. There is no sound in her room.

THE UNCLE. I should be uneasy if I heard any sound.

THE GRANDFATHER. It is a very long time since I saw my daughter! . . . I took her hands yesterday evening, but I could not see her! . . . I do not know what has become of her . . . I do not know how she is . . . I do not know what her face is like now . . . She must have changed these weeks! . . . I felt the little bones of her cheeks under my hands . . . There is nothing but the darkness between her and me, and the rest of you! . . . I cannot go on living like this . . . this is not living . . . You sit there, all of you, looking with open eyes at my dead eyes, and not one of you has pity on me! . . . I do not know what ails me . . . No one tells me what ought to be told me . . . And everything is terrifying when one's dreams dwell upon it . . . But why are you not speaking?

THE UNCLE. What should we say, since you will not believe us?

THE GRANDFATHER. You are afraid of betraying yourselves!

THE FATHER. Come now, be rational!

THE GRANDFATHER. You have been hiding something from me for a long time! . . . Something has happened in the house . . . But I am beginning to understand now . . . You have been deceiving me too long!—You fancy that I shall never know anything?—There are moments when I am less blind than you, you know! . . . Do you think I have not heard you whispering—for days and days—as if you were in the house of some one who had been hanged—I dare not say what I know this evening . . . But I shall know the truth! . . . I shall wait for you to tell me the truth; but I have known it for a long time, in spite of you!—And now, I feel that you are all paler than the dead!

THE THREE DAUGHTERS. Grandfather! grandfather! What is the matter, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER. It is not you that I am speaking of, girls. No; it is not you that I am speaking of . . . I know quite well you would tell me the truth—if they were not by! . . . And besides, I feel sure that they are deceiving

you as well . . . You will see, children—you will see! . . . Do not I hear you all sobbing?

THE FATHER. Is my wife really so ill?

THE GRANDFATHER. It is no good trying to deceive me any longer; it is too late now, and I know the truth better than you! . . .

THE UNCLE. But *we* are not blind; we are not.

THE FATHER. Would you like to go into your daughter's room? This misunderstanding must be put an end to.—Would you?

THE GRANDFATHER [*becoming suddenly undecided*]. No, no, not now—not yet.

THE UNCLE. You see, you are not reasonable.

THE GRANDFATHER. One never knows how much a man has been unable to express in his life! . . . Who made that noise?

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. It is the lamp flickering, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. It seems to me to be very unsteady—very!

THE DAUGHTER. It is the cold wind troubling it . . .

THE UNCLE. There is no cold wind, the windows are shut.

THE DAUGHTER. I think it is going out.

THE FATHER. There is no more oil.

THE DAUGHTER. It has gone right out.

THE FATHER. We cannot stay like this in the dark.

THE UNCLE. Why not?—I am quite accustomed to it.

THE FATHER. There is a light in my wife's room.

THE UNCLE. We will take it from there presently, when the doctor has been.

THE FATHER. Well, we can see enough here; there is the light from outside.

THE GRANDFATHER. Is it light outside?

THE FATHER. Lighter than here.

THE UNCLE. For my part, I would as soon talk in the dark.

THE FATHER. So would I.

[*Silence.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. It seems to me the clock makes a great deal of noise. . . .

THE ELDEST DAUGHTER. That is because we are not talking any more, grandfather.

THE GRANDFATHER. But why are you all silent?

THE UNCLE. What do you want us to talk about?—You are really very peculiar to-night.

THE GRANDFATHER. Is it very dark in this room?

THE UNCLE. There is not much light. [Silence.]

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not feel well, Ursula; open the window a little.

THE FATHER. Yes, child; open the window a little. I begin to feel the want of air myself.

[The girl opens the window.]

THE UNCLE. I really believe we have stayed shut up too long.

THE GRANDFATHER. Is the window open?

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather; it is wide open.

THE GRANDFATHER. One would not have thought it was open; there is not a sound outside.

THE DAUGHTER. No, grandfather; there is not the slightest sound.

THE FATHER. The silence is extraordinary!

THE DAUGHTER. One could hear an angel tread!

THE UNCLE. That is why I do not like the country.

THE GRANDFATHER. I wish I could hear some sound. What o'clock is it, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. It will soon be midnight, grandfather.

[Here the Uncle begins to pace up and down the room.]

THE GRANDFATHER. Who is that walking round us like that?

THE UNCLE. Only I! only I! Do not be frightened! I want to walk about a little. [Silence.]—But I am going to sit down again;—I cannot see where I am going. [Silence.]

THE GRANDFATHER. I wish I were out of this place!

THE DAUGHTER. Where would you like to go, grandfather?

THE GRANDFATHER. I do not know where—into another room, no matter where! no matter where!

THE FATHER. Where could we go?

THE UNCLE. It is too late to go anywhere else.

[*Silence. They are sitting, motionless, round the table.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. What is that I hear, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. Nothing, grandfather; it is the leaves falling.—Yes, it is the leaves falling on the terrace.

THE GRANDFATHER. Go and shut the window, Ursula.

THE DAUGHTER. Yes, grandfather.

[*She shuts the window, comes back, and sits down.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. I am cold. [*Silence. The Three Sisters kiss each other.*] What is that I hear now?

THE FATHER. It is the three sisters kissing each other.

THE UNCLE. It seems to me they are very pale this evening. [*Silence.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. What is that I hear now, Ursula?

THE DAUGHTER. Nothing, grandfather; it is the claspings of my hands. [*Silence.*]

THE GRANDFATHER. And that? . . .

THE DAUGHTER. I do not know, grandfather . . . perhaps my sisters are trembling a little? . . .

THE GRANDFATHER. I am afraid, too, my children.

[*Here a ray of moonlight penetrates through a corner of the stained glass, and throws strange gleams here and there in the room. A clock strikes midnight; at the last stroke there is a very vague sound, as of some one rising in haste.*]

THE GRANDFATHER [*shuddering with peculiar horror*]. Who is that who got up?

THE UNCLE. No one got up!

THE FATHER. I did not get up!

THE THREE DAUGHTERS. Nor I!—Nor I!—Nor I!

THE GRANDFATHER. Some one got up from the table!

THE UNCLE. Light the lamp! . . .

[*Cries of terror are suddenly heard from the child's room, on the right; these cries continue, with gradations of horror, until the end of the scene.*]

THE FATHER. Listen to the child!

THE UNCLE. He has never cried before!

THE FATHER. Let us go and see him!

THE UNCLE. The light! The light!

[At this moment, quick and heavy steps are heard in the room on the left.—Then a deathly silence.—They listen in mute terror, until the door of the room opens slowly, the light from it is cast into the room where they are sitting, and the Sister of Mercy appears on the threshold, in her black garments, and bows as she makes the sign of the cross, to announce the death of the wife. They understand, and, after a moment of hesitation and fright, silently enter the chamber of death, while the Uncle politely steps aside on the threshold to let the three girls pass. The blind man, left alone, gets up, agitated, and feels his way round the table in the darkness.]

THE GRANDFATHER. Where are you going?—Where are you going?—The girls have left me all alone!

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK

(1923)

BY

GEORGE S. KAUFMAN AND MARC CONNELLY

Suggested by "Hans Sonnenstoesser's Hohlenfahrt," by Paul Apel.

Copyright, 1924, by Horace Liveright, Inc.

Reprinted by special permission of Horace Liveright, Inc., New York.

"Beggar on Horseback" is the property of Winthrop Ames, 244 West 44th St., New York City. It may not be acted, either by professionals or amateurs, without permission and the payment of a royalty. Public readings and radio broadcastings are likewise prohibited.

CHARACTERS.

DR. ALBERT RICE.

CYNTHIA MASON.

NEIL McRAE.

MR. CADY.

MRS. CADY.

GLADYS CADY

HOMER CADY.

A BUTLER.

JERRY.

A BUSINESS MAN.

MISS HEY.

MISS YOU.

A WAITER.

A REPORTER.

A JUROR.

A GUIDE.

A SIGHTSEER.

A NOVELIST.

A SONG WRITER.

AN ARTIST.

A POET.

THE PANTOMIME—DURING PART II

A Kiss in Xanadu

The music of the pantomime, and all other music
used in the play, composed by Deems Taylor.

H.R.H. the Crown Prince of Xanadu.

H.R.H. the Crown Princess of Xanadu.

First Lady in Waiting.

First Lord of the Bedchamber.

A Lamplighter.

A Policeman.

Cæsar and Pompey.

BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK

PART I

The scene is Neil McRae's apartment in a comfortable run-down and not very expensive building. It is plainly an artist's room, and furnished with as many good looking things as the occupant could afford—which are not many. The most luxurious piece of furniture in the room is a grand piano, which Neil has probably hung on to with no little difficulty. It stands well down left. Down right is an easy chair—the only chair in the room that even suggests comfort—and against the rear wall is Neil's desk. In front of the desk is a swivel chair, and two or three other chairs, stiff-backed, stand around the room. At the left of the stage, near the piano, is a window, hung with chintz curtains that have seen better days—curtains which come to life here and there in great splotches of red. Some of the same stuff hangs in a centre doorway—a doorway that leads to Neil's bedroom and thence to a "kitchenette." The door into the apartment is at the right—somewhere beyond it is the elevator, and one needs only a look at the room to know that it is an elevator that requires four minutes to ascend the three floors.

[*The time is about four-thirty of a spring afternoon. The curtain rises on the room and nothing more; then, after a second, there comes a knock on the door. The knock is repeated, then the knob is cautiously turned and the door slowly opens. DR. ALBERT RICE, a young man of thirty or so, peers inquiringly into the room through the widening crack, sees no one, and enters.*]

ALBERT. Neil!

[*There is no answer; he observes the room. Slightly to his surprise, he sees a sewing basket on the piano.*]

Are you married? [*He goes up to the bedroom entrance and peers into the semi-darkness.*] Neil!

[CYNTHIA MASON, who seems to be about twenty-five, appears suddenly in the doorway at right. There is a moment of uncertainty as she and the doctor confront each other.]

CYNTHIA. Are you looking for Mr. McRae?

ALBERT. Yes. The door was open.

CYNTHIA [*disturbed*]. Really? Was it wide open?

ALBERT. It was closed, but it wasn't locked.

CYNTHIA. Oh! [*There is a pause of uncertainty.*] Was Mr. McRae expecting you?

ALBERT. No—I just got in from Chicago. Neil and I are old friends. My name is Rice.

CYNTHIA. Oh! You're not *Doctor* Rice?

ALBERT. Yes.

CYNTHIA [*laughing*]. I'm so relieved! My name is Cynthia Mason, Dr. Rice. I know a great deal about *you*. [*They shake hands.*]

ALBERT. Of course Neil never writes letters, so you've been concealed from me. You didn't know him a few months ago, did you, when I left New York?

CYNTHIA. No, only since he moved here. I live across the hall.

ALBERT. Oh, I see.

CYNTHIA [*looking around*]. There's that work basket. [*She takes it from the piano, then faces the doctor again.*] I hope you'll forgive me, when I tell you why I lingered.

ALBERT. You're forgiven.

CYNTHIA. Night before last we had burglars.

ALBERT. Really?

CYNTHIA. Not on this floor—the apartment below. The poor man lost three or four suits of clothes, so——

ALBERT [*with an understanding smile*]. So Neil leaves his door unlocked.

CYNTHIA. Probably since early this morning. Though I'm afraid the burglar who took Neil's clothes wouldn't do very well.

ALBERT [*with a look around the room*]. No, I suppose not.

CYNTHIA [*a pause; she turns, with an air of finality*]. Well, he'll be here soon.

ALBERT. You're not going?

CYNTHIA. I must. Neil has some people coming to tea.

ALBERT [*bent on holding her*]. Well—now, how do you know I'm *not* the burglar?

CYNTHIA. Because I don't believe there are such things as gentlemen burglars.

[*She drops a half curtsy; turns again toward the door.*]

ALBERT. Oh, wait! What did Neil tell you about me?

CYNTHIA. Let me see. He said you were extremely brilliant. But too versatile.

ALBERT. Brilliant, yes. But versatile—on the contrary, I'm going to become a specialist.

CYNTHIA. Sometimes I wonder what's happened to all the young men who used to become just doctors.

ALBERT. They all died of starvation.

[*There is a pause; CYNTHIA looks at her watch.*]

CYNTHIA. I don't know why Neil isn't here.

ALBERT. You don't expect *him* to be prompt, do you?

CYNTHIA. But he has some people coming. You may know them—their name is Cady.

ALBERT. Cady? Not the Cadys from Livingston?

CYNTHIA. Yes—*do* you know them?

ALBERT. I'm not sure—I think I used to. You know, I lived in Livingston myself, a long time ago.

CYNTHIA. So Neil told me.

ALBERT [*puzzled*]. The Cadys? What are *they* coming for?

CYNTHIA. Miss Cady is Neil's pupil.

ALBERT. You mean he's giving her music lessons?

CYNTHIA. He is.

ALBERT. But he's not a teacher. [*He waits for a denial.*]
Is he?

CYNTHIA. He *must* do something.

ALBERT [*with a sigh*]. Things aren't any better with him, then?

CYNTHIA. Well, he isn't ready to retire.

ALBERT [*with a shake of the head*]. I suppose he'll always go on this way. He's so—utterly improvident, so——

CYNTHIA [*rallying to his defense*]. Well—he's really improved in that way. He may surprise you.

ALBERT. He certainly would.

CYNTHIA. He's saving money! [*Her tone changes.*] But the trouble is—he's working so hard to get it.

ALBERT. You mean giving music lessons?

CYNTHIA. Worse. You've got to talk to him—he won't listen to me. He's been sitting up night after night——

NEIL [*heard in the hallway*]. Halloo! [*He kicks open the door and enters. He is carrying a pile of books, and on top of the pile a music portfolio. He sees ALBERT; dumps the books abruptly into the easy chair.*] Albert! Well, I'll be damned! [*Tosses his hat into the bedroom; seizes ALBERT'S hand.*]

ALBERT. Mr. McRae, I believe?

NEIL. Where did you come from? Chicago?

ALBERT. This morning. Of course, you never told me you'd moved. How are you?

NEIL. Never felt better! Gosh, I'm glad you're back! You've met Cynthia?

CYNTHIA. Well, we've been talking. I thought I'd caught the burglar.

NEIL. Did you find him in here? [*To ALBERT.*] How did you get in?

ALBERT [*elaborately*]. First I turned the knob of the door——

CYNTHIA. And, as you hadn't locked it, he had no difficulty in entering. [*She turns to the books in the easy chair.*] What are these?

NEIL. Why—just some books.

CYNTHIA [*takes one up*]. "Life of Charles I." Neil!

NEIL. Well—I used to be very interested in history, and especially——

CYNTHIA [*severely*]. The truth, Neil!

NEIL. I—I bought them, that's all.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil. After your promise!

NEIL. Well— [*To ALBERT.*] Just take a look at this binding.

ALBERT [*giving no encouragement*]. Yes. I see it.

CYNTHIA [*determined*]. Neil, where did you get them?

NEIL [*still to ALBERT*]. There was a burglary downstairs, and this fellow lost all his clothes.

CYNTHIA [*resigned*]. And you bought these books from him.

NEIL. Well—ah——

CYNTHIA. You work at these terrible orchestrations to make a little money, and then—did you go to bed at all last night?

NEIL. Of course I did.

CYNTHIA. Doctor, you *will* talk to him, won't you? [*She takes up her work basket.*] I'm sure he hasn't been sleeping—he hasn't been doing *anything* he should. [*She is heading for the door.*]

NEIL. You're not going?

CYNTHIA. I am. You have people coming to tea, remember.

NEIL. Good heavens, what time is it?

CYNTHIA. Nearly five. I suppose you have everything ready?

NEIL. Why, yes—I've got—that is, I think—— [*He smiles helplessly.*] Be a darling and help me, will you?

CYNTHIA. Are you sure you have everything? [*Knowing well that he hasn't.*]

NEIL. I think so.

CYNTHIA. He thinks so. [*This to ALBERT, with a smile, as she goes through the bedroom doorway.*]

ALBERT. She's charming, Neil.

NEIL. Isn't she? [*He moves his portfolio from the chair to the desk.*] She's a designer in one of the big dressmaking firms. Did she tell you how we met?

ALBERT. No.

NEIL. She lives across the hall. [*He raises his voice for CYNTHIA's benefit.*] She thinks she can play the piano.

CYNTHIA [*in the kitchen*]. I can!

NEIL. You cannot! [*To ALBERT.*] One night I knocked on her door and asked her to stop. She did. We've been great pals ever since. [*Calling to CYNTHIA.*] Can I help you, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA. No, nor anyone else. [*She returns.*] Do you remember when you last had any tea?

NEIL. The other day.

CYNTHIA. You have three leaves left. [*She exhibits them.*]

NEIL [*inspects them*]. Four!

CYNTHIA. And did you know that your toast machine was burnt out?

NEIL. Oh, yes—I forgot. But I'm sure there's some tea—I remember—no, I used the last of it early this morning. I'll run right out—— [*He is about to start.*]

CYNTHIA [*holding him*]. Neil!

NEIL. What?

CYNTHIA. Then you *were* up all night?

NEIL. Why—not exactly.

CYNTHIA [*to the doctor*]. He's been sitting up making orchestrations for a cheap little music publisher. Neil, it's like copying bad paintings. Doctor, you must make him stop.

NEIL. Well—I'll go out and get some tea.

CYNTHIA. No! You stay and talk to the Doctor. I'll bring everything over from my place. [*Again she picks up the basket.*]

NEIL. I can't let you do that. Let me help.

CYNTHIA. I will not. [*She goes.*]

NEIL [*more to himself than to ALBERT*]. I could have sworn I had everything.

ALBERT. She'll take care of things. [*He is near the window.*] Come over here and let me see you.

NEIL. Now, you're not going to fuss over me just because I've been doing some work.

ALBERT. No. But I want to look at you. [*An orchestra, in a restaurant across the street, strikes up a jazz tune. It comes faintly through the window.*]

NEIL. Good Lord, that again!

ALBERT. What?

NEIL. That damned cabaret orchestra across the street. It begins at five every afternoon.

ALBERT. You *are* nervous, aren't you?

NEIL. Huh? No. I just don't like that music.

ALBERT. *Did* you work all night?

NEIL. Some of it.

ALBERT. It's bad business, Neil. [*He feels for his pulse.*] How many Cadys are coming to tea?

NEIL. Oh, did Cynthia tell you? You remember the Cadys?

ALBERT. Vaguely. I don't suppose they'd know me. Do they live here now?

NEIL. They moved East a few months ago. Gladys is my one and only music pupil.

ALBERT [*watch in hand*]. Rich, I suppose?

NEIL. Lord, yes. Millions.

ALBERT. What did he make it in? [*He puts away the watch.*]

NEIL. Funny—I don't even know. Manufactures something.

ALBERT [*trying to remember*]. Just the one daughter, isn't there?

NEIL. Yes. [*Adds, as an afterthought.*] There's a brother.

ALBERT [*recalls him, apparently none too pleasantly*]. I remember him.

NEIL. I *had* to ask them. For heaven's sake, stay and help out.

ALBERT [*with a laugh*]. Well, I'll stay a little while. [*Feels for his pipe.*]

NEIL. Try to get away. [*ALBERT laughs, lightly.*] Well, what's the verdict on *me*?

ALBERT. You're just a little tired, that's all. Sort of nervous.

NEIL. Nonsense.

ALBERT. Got any tobacco?

NEIL. Right there on the desk.

ALBERT [*fooling with the tobacco jar; unable to open it*]. Have you been writing *anything* of your own?

NEIL. Well, no—only snatches of things. I'm going to get back at it soon, though.

ALBERT. That's good. [*The jar in hand.*] How do you open this thing?

NEIL. [*Takes up a paper knife from the piano—a knife of ivory, scimitar-shaped, and with a long black tassel hanging from it.*] I use this. Give it to me. [ALBERT *hands it over*; NEIL *opens and returns it, all without a word.*]

ALBERT [*filling his pipe*]. How old is the daughter now?

NEIL. Gladys?

ALBERT. Yes.

NEIL. Twenty-two or three—I don't know. Why? [*He puts the knife back on the piano.*]

ALBERT. How soon will they be here?

NEIL. Any minute, I guess. Why all the questions?

ALBERT. I just wondered. [*Takes a medical case from his pocket and shakes out a pill.*] I want you to take one of these before they come, and another one later on.

NEIL. Good heavens, there's nothing the matter with me.

ALBERT. I know there isn't.

NEIL. What'll they do—make me sleep?

ALBERT. They'll quiet you.

NEIL. But I don't dare go to sleep. In the first place the Cadys are coming, and——

[CYNTHIA *re-enters*. *She is now hatless, and carries a folded table-cloth.*]

CYNTHIA. I hope you scolded him. [*She goes to the desk and begins to spread the cloth.*]

ALBERT. Not enough, I'm afraid. [*Pill in hand.*] Do you think you have a glass of water left?

NEIL [*starting*]. Oh, of course!

ALBERT. No, no. I can find it. [*He goes into the bedroom.*]

CYNTHIA [*with a glance at the portfolio*]. You didn't let them give you more to do?

NEIL. Why, hardly any. It's all right.

CYNTHIA. It *isn't* all right! Oh, I wouldn't mind if it were something decent! But it's perfectly sickening to think of your genius being choked to death in this way!

NEIL. I'll work on the symphony soon, honestly.

CYNTHIA. And then make up for it by mere hack-work. I wish someone would subsidize you.

NEIL. That would be nice. [ALBERT comes back with the glass of water.]

ALBERT. Here you are! [Gives NEIL pill and glass.]

NEIL. Oh, all right. But there's nothing the matter with me. [He takes the pill.]

ALBERT. How was it?

NEIL. I've tasted better. [The orchestra across the street is heard in another outburst of jazz.] Would you believe that people actually enjoy that? Wait! I've got one here that will be next month's national anthem. [Searches for it in portfolio.] There aren't any words to it yet, but it's going to be called "Sweet Mamma."

CYNTHIA. Don't, Neil. Play Dr. Rice the second movement of your symphony.

NEIL. Want to hear it?

ALBERT. You bet. [He indicates the pipe.] Do you mind?

CYNTHIA. Not at all.

NEIL. She calls it the second movement because there isn't any first.

CYNTHIA [finding it]. Here! [She spreads the manuscript on the rack.]

NEIL. You understand this is just a movement. It's— [He sees place that needs correction.] Oh! [Starts fishing for a pencil.] Of course I never have a pencil. [CYNTHIA gets one from his left vest pocket and hands it to him.] Oh, thanks! [He makes the correction.] It's just a sketch. Not finished, you know.

CYNTHIA. But it's going to be—and soon. [NEIL starts to play, but is not far into it when the telephone rings.]

NEIL [stops playing]. I'll bet that's the Cadys. [Goes to the telephone.] Hello! [To CYNTHIA.] It is. Downstairs. . . . Send them right up, Jerry.

CYNTHIA. Good heavens, I'll have to bring the tea things in.

NEIL. Why not?

CYNTHIA. They don't want to meet me.

NEIL. Don't be foolish.

CYNTHIA. Well—I won't stay. [*She goes.*]

NEIL. I suppose I ought to clear things up a bit.

ALBERT [*with a glance at the books in the easy chair*]. If you expect them to sit down. [*NEIL carries the books into his bedroom. He returns, counts the chairs, then tests a spindley-legged one that stands centre.*]

NEIL. I hope nobody heavy sits in this.

[*Voices are heard in the hall, and MR. and MRS. CADY, HOMER, and GLADYS appear at the open door. MRS. CADY enters first, then GLADYS, then MR. CADY and HOMER. Together they make up an average Middle West family. They have no marked external characteristics except that HOMER is wearing a violent yellow tie.*]

MRS. CADY. Why, Neil!

NEIL. How are you Mrs. Cady? Gladys.

MRS. CADY. After all these years!

GLADYS. Hello, Neil!

CADY. Well, well, Neil, my boy!

NEIL. Hello, Mr. Cady!

HOMER. Hello, there!

NEIL. How are you, Homer?

HOMER. Not so good.

NEIL [*feeling keenly his position as host*]. Ah—this is Dr. Rice. Mr. and Mrs. Cady. and—Miss Cady and—Cady. [*His voice trails off. There are the indistinct greetings that follow an introduction.*]

MRS. CADY. Doctor, did you say?

ALBERT. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. CADY. Homer, here's a doctor.

HOMER. Yes?

MRS. CADY. Homer's had a good deal of trouble from time

to time. Sit here, Homer—in this easy chair. [HOMER *takes the only easy chair.*]

NEIL [*delinquent*]. Oh, yes—sit down, everybody. I'm sorry I—ah——

MRS. CADY. Oh, that's all right. We'll just settle ourselves. [*She sits in the swivel chair at the desk.*]

NEIL [*stirring up conversation*]. Ah—Dr. Rice comes from Livingston, too.

MRS. CADY. Really?

CADY. That so?

ALBERT. Oh, a long time ago. We moved away when I was very young.

MRS. CADY. I wonder if I—[*There is a sneeze from HOMER.*]—Are you all right, Homer?

HOMER. Yes. [*Something in his tone says that he is as all right as possible, considering where he is.*]

MRS. CADY [*blandly finishing*]. —knew your people?

HOMER. I don't remember them. [*You gather that ALBERT just couldn't have had any people.*]

CADY [*at the telephone*]. Mind if I use this?

NEIL. Oh, no, of course not.

CADY. Thanks. I left the office a little early. [*Takes the receiver off.*]

MRS. CADY [*bent on placing the doctor*]. Let me see. Old Mrs. Rice——

CADY. Cortlandt 8262.

MRS. CADY. I guess you're not the same. [*There is a half-query in her voice.*]

ALBERT. Well, as a matter of fact, I moved away just after you came there.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I see.

GLADYS [*producing a box of candy*]. I brought you some candy for your tea, Neil.

NEIL. Oh, thanks. [*To MRS. CADY, who is teetering in the desk chair.*] There's another chair if——

MRS. CADY. No, I like this. Feels like my rocking chair at home. [*She sways back and forth.*]

GLADYS. Mother's favorite chair is her rocker.

MRS. CADY. There's nothing like an old-fashioned rocking chair.

CADY [*at the telephone*]. Let me talk to Burgess.

MRS. CADY. Mr. Cady says I'm chair-bound. Just joking, you know. [*She explains elaborately, to ALBERT.*] Mr. Cady. Says I'm chair-bound.

ALBERT [*just the news he was waiting for*]. Oh, yes.

SIMULTANEOUSLY

MRS. CADY

Let me see: there were two families of Rice out there, and I remember that one of them came here, just before we left. [*She finishes in a sibilant whisper, having been shushed by her husband.*]

CADY

Burgess? Any word from 653? . . . Hush, mother. . . . Well, I'll tell you what to do. We ought to send a tracer. . . . That's right. . . . Well, I'll tell you what to do—if you don't hear by six o'clock send a tracer. That's all.

[CADY hangs up: turns to NEIL.]

CADY. Much obliged. When I get a foot away from a telephone I'm lost. [*He starts for the weak chair; NEIL makes a movement.*] What is it?

NEIL. That chair isn't very strong.

CADY. Oh, I'll be careful.

NEIL, [*not exactly at ease*]. We're going to have some—tea and things—pretty soon now.

CADY [*has taken out a cigar*]. Match?

NEIL [*starting*]. How's that?

CADY. Match.

NEIL. Oh, yes! Right here. [*NEIL lights his cigar.*]

GLADYS [*taking in the room*]. See, mama, isn't it cute?

MRS. CADY. Yes, indeed.

GLADYS. There's the piano over there.

MRS. CADY. Oh, yes. [*Everybody looks at the piano.*] Neil must play something for us. [*It is Remark No. 80 and purely perfunctory.*]

CADY. It's certainly very nice. We've been hearing quite a bit about you, Neil.

NEIL. Is that so?

CADY. Hear you've become quite a musician since you went away from Livingston.

NEIL. Oh, I don't know.

CADY. Well, Gladys has been telling us so. So we thought we'd come and find out for ourselves. Gave up a golf game to do it, too. Play golf?

NEIL. No, I don't.

CADY. Play golf, Doctor?

ALBERT. I'm sorry.

CADY. Well, everybody ought to. Great exercise. Keeps a man fit for business. I'd make Homer do it, if he wasn't so delicate. [*HOMER shifts in his seat.*]

MRS. CADY. Comfortable, Homer?

HOMER [*carelessly*]. Um-hum.

[*CYNTHIA comes in with the tea things.*]

NEIL. Oh, here we are! I—I want you to meet Miss Mason. She's brought the things over from her place.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I see.

NEIL [*beginning again the weary round of introductions*]. Mrs. Cady and—of course you know Gladys—

GLADYS. Yes.

CYNTHIA. How are you, Miss Cady?

NEIL. And Mr. Cady and—another Mr. Cady. [*HOMER does not rise. Mumbled greetings are exchanged.*] Miss Mason lives—just across the hall.

MRS. CADY. Yes, so Gladys has told us. Are you a musician, too, Miss Mason?

CYNTHIA. No, I'm not, Mrs. Cady.

MRS. CADY [*turning to her husband*]. Don't she make you think of Elizabeth Merkle, Fred?

CADY. Well—I see what you mean.

HOMER [*ever the dissenter*]. She don't me.

MRS. CADY. Of course Elizabeth's dark, but there's something about the shape of the face. [*To NEIL.*] You knew the Merkses, Neil. Mr. Merkle had the skating rink.

NEIL. Oh, yes. Elizabeth was a little girl when I knew her.

MRS. CADY. She's twenty-two or three. Twenty-three, isn't she, Fred?

CADY. Yes, I guess so.

HOMER. Lizzie Merkle's crazy. She's going to marry Lou Carmichael.

GLADYS. Oh, did grandma say when it was to be?

MRS. CADY. No, I don't think they know themselves. You knew Lou, didn't you, Neil? [CYNTHIA is serving tea.]

NEIL. Did they live over on Pine Street?

MRS. CADY. I think they did.

HOMER. No, they didn't.

GLADYS. Hush up! They did. They lived next door to Dr. Endicott.

HOMER. They did not. They've always lived on Mead Avenue.

GLADYS. Well, I guess I ought to know. Didn't I go and meet his sister once? Remember that tall girl, mama?

HOMER. You're crazy.

MRS. CADY. Lou used to take Gladys to dances a lot.

GLADYS. He was a wonderful dancer! [She giggles.]

MRS. CADY. He was with the telephone company.

HOMER [scornfully]. Charlie Ferris nearly beat him up.

MRS. CADY. Remember when he and Charlie Ferris were crazy about Gladys? This girl's had more boys crazy about her, Neil. [CYNTHIA gives tea to CADY.]

GLADYS. Oh, I never cared for either of them.

HOMER. You never let them *think* so.

GLADYS [smugly]. Homer!

HOMER [to NEIL, unpleasantly, as he passes tea to him]. No, thanks. Tea always sits on me.

CADY. Say, I hear your Uncle James is dead, Neil. Leave you anything?

NEIL. No—Uncle James never had anything.

CADY. Too bad. He was a fine man. Everybody was sorry when he moved to Boston.

MRS. CADY. He was nice. [To CYNTHIA.] We used to sing together in Sunday school when we were children.

NEIL. I remember you sang in the choir.

GLADYS. Mama still sings, when she lets herself go.

HOMER. We call her Galli-Curci.

MRS. CADY [*genially*]. They're always joking me about my voice. But I do love old hymns. Your father was a good singer, too, Neil.

NEIL. I guess he was a better lawyer.

CADY. Yes, everybody had a great deal of respect for John McRae.

MRS. CADY. He was a beautiful character.

CADY. He'd give his money away to everybody. Afraid he never made very much, though. Lawyers don't, as a rule. Neil, did you know that when I was a young man I studied law—right in the same office with your father?

NEIL. No? Did you?

CADY. Yes, sir. Had it all figured out to be a judge—Judge Cady—till I found out what was the most a judge could make. [*Puts his tea down, almost untasted.*]

CYNTHIA. Too strong?

CADY. No. I'm not much of a tea drinker.

MRS. CADY. I guess Gladys and I are the tea drinkers in our family. We have it every afternoon. [*NEIL is opening the candy box.*]

GLADYS. Neil's going to come up and have some with us next week. Tuesday.

NEIL. Candy? [*MRS. CADY takes a piece; so does MR. CADY.*]

MRS. CADY. That's nice. We'll have some people in. I want you to see the new house. My, I don't know what the folks would say back in Livingston if they could see it. Remember our house in Livingston, Neil?

NEIL. Yes, indeed. [*He passes the candy box to HOMER, who waves it disdainfully aside.*]

MRS. CADY [*trying to be bantering*]. You ought to. You were there enough. Every afternoon, pretty near. Neil and Gladys would play together and I'd go out in the kitchen and make candy for them. [*She rocks.*]

GLADYS. Oh, yes! Wasn't it fun, Neil?

MRS. CADY. We always saved some pieces for Mr. Cady.

All the Cadys are fond of candy. Aren't they, Fred? [*She taps his knee.*]

CADY [*munching*]. Guess that's right, mother.

HOMER. I'm not.

MRS. CADY. Except Homer. [*She resumes, largely to herself.*] All the Cadys eat candy.

CYNTHIA. And now—if you'll excuse me. [*Rises.*]

NEIL. Oh, you're not going? [*HOMER doesn't rise with the other men.*]

CYNTHIA. I'm afraid I must.

CADY. That's too bad.

MRS. CADY. Well, I hope we meet again.

CYNTHIA. I just ran in for a moment to be temporary hostess.

GLADYS. Goodbye, Miss Mason.

CYNTHIA [*to ALBERT*]. I hope I'll see you again. [*Shakes his hand.*]

ALBERT. Oh, I'll be back in a few weeks.

[*There are further goodbyes. CYNTHIA goes.*]

MRS. CADY [*looking after her*]. She is like Elizabeth.

CADY [*noisily*]. Well—how are things generally, Neil? Making a lot of money out of your music?

NEIL. No—with music you don't make a great deal of money.

CADY. I don't know about that. It's just like any other business. Maybe you're not giving them what they want.

MRS. CADY. I guess Neil's doing his best, aren't you, Neil?

CADY. We've all got to please the public. Eh, Doctor?

ALBERT. Oh, yes.

CADY. I've got to in my business. Of course I don't claim to know anything about music, but I think I represent about the average viewpoint. Now, what I like is a good lively tune—something with a little snap to it. As I understand it, though, you sort of go in for—highbrow music.

NEIL. It isn't exactly that.

CADY. Well, there's no money in it. You know what happened to your father.

MRS. CADY. Had to scrape all his life. [*Turns to ALBERT.*]
Neil's father. Had to scrape all his life.

CADY. A young fellow's got to look out for his future, I claim—got to save up a little money.

NEIL [*puzzled*]. Yes, sir.

MRS. CADY [*helping along what is clearly a prearranged conversation*]. In some business, Mr. Cady means.

CADY. Yes. Now you take—well, my business, for example. We've always got an opening for—a bright young fellow.

NEIL. You mean—*me*—in your business?

CADY. Well, I just mentioned that for example.

NEIL. I—I'm afraid I wouldn't be much good in business, Mr. Cady.

MRS. CADY. Of course you'd be good.

NEIL. I did work once in an office, and I guess I wasn't—very——

CADY. That's all right. You'd learn. The idea is you'd be making money. Some day you'd maybe have a nice interest in the firm. 'Tain't as though you couldn't write a little music now and then in your spare time, and we'd be sort of all together. [*The jazz orchestra is heard again—this time louder.*]

MRS. CADY. Just like one big family.

GLADYS [*singing and swaying to the tune*]. Oh, they're playing "The Frog's Party." [*To NEIL.*] Come on and dance!

NEIL. I'm sorry, but I don't dance.

GLADYS. Oh, so you don't—but I'm going to make you learn. I know a wonderful teacher. [*Turns to ALBERT.*] Dance, Doctor?

ALBERT. A little.

[*GLADYS and ALBERT take a few turns about the room.*

MRS. CADY *humms the tune, not knowing the words.*]

CADY. Great song! A man I played golf with yesterday tells me that for the first six months of the fiscal year that song'll make a hundred thousand dollars. Write something like that and you're fixed. That's music.

HOMER. We got it on the radio last night.

ALBERT [*politely*]. You don't say?

GLADYS [*near the piano*]. Oh, Neil!

[*The three remaining CADYS are grouped with ALBERT.*]

SIMULTANEOUSLY

GLADYS.

CADY.

[*Holds up a piece of music,
as NEIL crosses to her.*]

Couple of hundred miles
away, wasn't it?

What's this?

HOMER.

NEIL.

Three hundred.

Just something I'm working
on.

CADY.

GLADYS.

Think of that!

[*Sotto voce.*]

ALBERT.

I want to talk to you.

It's wonderful.

NEIL.

MRS. CADY.

Oh!

I was going to ask you,
Doctor, if you're related to
those other Rices. There
were two daughters, I think.

GLADYS.

Don't you want to talk to
me?

NEIL.

ALBERT.

Oh, yes.

No, I haven't any relatives
left, there.

GLADYS.

Neil.

[*Points to a small photo-
graph on piano.*]

CADY.

Live in New York, now, I
suppose?

NEIL.

Yes?

ALBERT.

GLADYS.

No, Chicago. I'm just here
for a flying visit.

[*Takes up the picture.*]

Can I have one of these?

CADY.

NEIL.

I'm afraid I haven't got another.

GLADYS.

This was in the Musical Courier, wasn't it?

NEIL.

Why, yes.

GLADYS.

I saw it. You're pretty well known, Neil. I'm proud of you. I wish I could have this one. Only I wish it were of you alone, instead of you and this other girl, whoever she is.

[Puts picture back.]

NEIL.

It's just a girl I met one summer.

[A pause.]

GLADYS.

Neil?

NEIL.

Well?

GLADYS.

Do you like me better than you do Miss Mason?

Chicago? Don't say? Well, that's a good town.

HOMER.

Chicago a good town? Huh!

MRS. CADY.

It would be nice if you could come up and see us, too, Doctor.

ALBERT.

Thank you, but I'm going back soon.

MRS. CADY

Well, do come if you can. Any day after Thursday. Both our butlers are leaving, and I can't get any new ones to come until after the holiday. But we always like to have people from Livingston drop in. I always say if you don't keep in touch with your old home town, why your old home town won't keep in touch with you.

HOMER.

I never want to go back there.

CADY.

Well, I don't know as I do either.

MRS. CADY.

Listen to that man. And

NEIL.

Well, I think she's awfully nice.

GLADYS.

Don't you think I'm nice, too?

NEIL.

Yes, of course.

GLADYS.

Because, I think *you* are. You know that, don't you, Neil?

NEIL.

[*Nearly choking.*]
I'm—glad.

GLADYS.

So, of course, I want *you* to think *I* am.

NEIL.

I—do.

GLADYS.

[*Suddenly.*]
Oh! That reminds me.
[*Fishes in her handbag.*]

NEIL.

What is it?

GLADYS.

[*Bringing out four or five small samples of colored cloths.*]

to think he was president of the Board of Trade there for five mortal y

CADY.

[*Thoughtfully to ALBERT.*]

You know, I think I've got you placed now. Was your father E. J. Rice in the lumber business?

ALBERT.

No, he was an architect.

MRS. CADY.

An architect—you don't say? Put up buildings, did he?

ALBERT.

Yes, a few.

MRS. CADY.

Put up any buildings in Livingston?

ALBERT.

Why, yes.

CADY.

Not the First National?

ALBERT.

No, he designed the Mechanics' Building, right next door.

I knew I wanted to ask you something. Which do you like best?

NEIL.

Why, they're all very nice.

GLADYS.

But don't you like one best?

NEIL.

I don't know. They're all sort of—ah—why—

GLADYS.

Because I'd like to get the one you'd like.

[NEIL is puzzled. She spreads the samples on his arm.]

They're samples, silly! I'm going from here to the dress-maker's to pick one out.

NEIL.

Oh, I see.

[He removes the samples.]

GLADYS.

[Pouting.]

Of course if you don't care what I wear, why, all right.

NEIL.

[Not enthusiastic.]

I do care.

GLADYS.

[Eager again.]

Well, which one would you rather see me in? The blue?

CADY.

You don't say?

MRS. CADY.

Well, that's a nice building, too.

HOMER.

I remember it.

MRS. CADY.

Mr. Cady had his offices in the First National Building.

ALBERT.

Is that so?

CADY.

I guess there's been quite a building boom since you were there. That whole block is pretty solid now.

ALBERT.

Really?

MRS. CADY.

My, yes. You wouldn't know the place.

CADY.

Yes, sir! I guess there's been a good many million dollars invested there in the last five years.

ALBERT.

You don't say?

NEIL.

Yes, that would be nice.

MRS. CADY.

Mr. Cady put up a building himself.

GLADYS.

I like the pink one myself.

ALBERT.

That so?

CADY.

Just a warehouse. Of course we still have a plant there——

HOMER [*heard by himself*]. It's half past, pop. [*Rises.*]CADY. Yes, I guess we'll have to be going. [*Rises.*]MRS. CADY. Ready, Gladys? [*Rises.*]GLADYS. Yes, mamma. [*Starts, then turns back to NEIL.*]

SIMULTANEOUSLY

GLADYS.

[*Suddenly, to NEIL.*]
Oh, Neil!

MRS. CADY.

Well, now, don't forget, Doctor! Come and see us, if you can.

NEIL.

Yes?

ALBERT.

GLADYS.

Thank you.

I won't go home for dinner
—if you don't want me to.

CADY.

Or have a round of golf with me some time. Play golf?

NEIL.

Well, I did sort of think
I'd do some work—

ALBERT.

I'm sorry, I don't.

GLADYS.

CADY.

I remember—I asked you before.

I'll go with *you* to a new restaurant I just heard about! I'll tell you what! I'll only be at the dressmaker's a few minutes. Then you can meet me.

HOMER.

[*Impatient.*]
Oh, come on!

NEIL.

Well, I don't know exactly how I'll be fixed.

GLADYS.

I'll telephone you the minute I'm finished.

NEIL.

But, Gladys, I'm going to be tied up, I'm afraid, and——

GLADYS.

Well, anyway, I'll phone.

CADY. Come on, Gladys.

GLADYS. All right. [*To NEIL.*] I'll telephone you from the dressmaker's when I'm through.

MRS. CADY. And, Neil—you're coming Tuesday, remember.

NEIL. Oh, thanks. I'm sorry I couldn't have had a nicer party for you.

MRS. CADY. It was elegant. Only next time we come, you must play something for us.

NEIL. I'll ring for the elevator.

MRS. CADY. Oh, that's nice. Come on, Homer.

[*NEIL, MR. CADY, and MRS. CADY pass into the hall.*]

GLADYS. Goodbye, Doctor.

ALBERT. Goodbye, Miss Cady.

[*GLADYS follows them out; HOMER lingers with the Doctor.*]

HOMER. What about him? Do you know him well?

[*He takes out a box of powders.*]

ALBERT. Who? Neil?

HOMER. Yeh. Is he all right?

ALBERT. Why?

MRS. CADY.

Just a second, Homer. Gladys is talking.

HOMER.

She's always talking.

MRS. CADY.

[*To ALBERT, with a laugh.*]

Just like a brother, isn't he?

CADY.

Well, goodbye, Doctor.

ALBERT.

Goodbye, Mr. Cady.

HOMER. Well, I just like to know things about a possible brother-in-law.

ALBERT. I see.

HOMER. Gladys is nutty about him. Thinks he's artistic, my God! And did you hear the old man? Just because his father was John McRae! [*Puts the powder on his tongue—takes a glass of water.*]

MRS. CADY [*in the hall*]. Hurry, Homer!

HOMER [*calling*]. All right! [*He swallows the words, drinking at the same time.*] So long. Well, I hope it don't happen. [*He strolls out.*]

ALBERT. So long.

[*The voices of the departing guests are heard in the hall. Neil returns; looks back into the hall.*]

NEIL. What was all that about?

ALBERT. Oh, nothing in particular.

NEIL. How did you like the Cadys?

ALBERT. They seem to be all right. They must be richer than mud. Did you hear Mrs. Cady on her "butlers"?

NEIL. No.

ALBERT. I never heard of anybody having more than one butler before, but the Cadys seem to have 'em in pairs.

NEIL [*laughing*]. I haven't been to their house yet. I'm going next week, though. [*His glance going to the door.*] Say! Homer's a dirty dog, isn't he?

ALBERT [*thoughtfully*]. Neil, I want to talk to you.

NEIL. Good Lord, again?

ALBERT. In the first place, I want you to go to bed.

NEIL. At half past five o'clock?

ALBERT. You haven't slept for days.

NEIL. But I can't go to bed now. I've got work to do. [*A second's pause.*] You don't mean I'm sick?

ALBERT. No, but you need rest. I want you to put on your dressing gown and lie down for a while. And then take another one of these. [*Produces the pills.*]

NEIL. But I can't afford to go to sleep. I told you that. I've got work to do.

ALBERT. You can't work tonight.

NEIL. I must.

ALBERT. On those orchestrations?

NEIL. Yes. [*A pause.*]

ALBERT. Neil.

NEIL. What?

ALBERT. I want to talk to you about something else.

NEIL. Good heavens!

ALBERT. All right, but—somebody has to. [*Neil looks up, sensing something important.*] What are you going to do about your work?

NEIL. Huh?

ALBERT. Your *real* work, I mean. How much have you done since I went away?

NEIL. Well, what you heard. And Miss Mason and I are working out a little pantomime together. It's going to be a lot of fun——

ALBERT. How much of it is written?

NEIL. A lot. About half, I guess.

ALBERT. About half a movement of a symphony and about half a pantomime.

NEIL. I still have to eat.

ALBERT. But Neil, don't you see—you're wasting your genius!

NEIL. Genius, my hat!

ALBERT. You're wasting the best years you'll ever have doing odd jobs just to keep alive. You've got to be free to write.

NEIL. Well, maybe some day I'll write a popular song and make a million.

ALBERT. If you ever did you'd either burn it or sell it for ten dollars. You'll never make any money, Neil. You know that as well as I do.

NEIL. Then what's the answer? Are you going to subsidize me?

ALBERT. I wish to God I could! But there's no reason why you shouldn't subsidize yourself.

NEIL. What do you mean?

ALBERT. I mean the Cadys.

NEIL. What are you talking—Oh, don't be foolish!

ALBERT. Why is it foolish?

NEIL. Gladys would never—why, you're crazy!

ALBERT. Am I? Think back. How did she behave this afternoon? And Papa Cady? "Nice little share in the business?" And—well, I know what I'm talking about.

NEIL. You mean you're seriously advising me to ask Gladys Cady to marry me?

ALBERT. That's exactly what I'm doing. She's a nice girl, and pretty. You'd have comfort and money and time——

NEIL [*interrupting, with growing excitement*]. Well, what about *me*? Do you think money and music and time would make up for everything else? No, sir! I'd rather keep on living right here—just as I am now—all my life long.

ALBERT. Now, now! Don't get temperamental! If you'll just——

[*CYNTHIA opens the door.*]

CYNTHIA. May a poor girl call for her dishes?

NEIL. I'm sorry—I should have brought them over.

CYNTHIA [*detecting a note in his voice*]. Neil, there's nothing the matter?

ALBERT. I've been trying to persuade him to rest. [*To NEIL.*] Won't you go in and—get ready?

NEIL. I—I can't now.

CYNTHIA. Neil, please. [*A pause.*]

NEIL. All right. But don't go away. I want to talk to you. [*He goes into the bedroom.*]

CYNTHIA. He *is* difficult.

ALBERT. Yes, he is.

CYNTHIA. I'm glad you've taken charge of him.

[*She is collecting the tea dishes.*]

ALBERT. He'll be all right. Just needs sleep, that's all. I'm not worrying about him physically so much as—well, spiritually.

CYNTHIA. I know. I've been worrying about it for weeks.

ALBERT. You do see his genius, don't you?

CYNTHIA. Oh, yes! He has it, if anyone ever had.

ALBERT. And this hack-work—it must be killing his spirit.

CYNTHIA. When I think of his keeping on, year after year! And he's such a babe-in-arms about practical things. He *does* so need—— [*She hesitates.*] We must do something, mustn't we?

ALBERT. Yes, we must. [*A pause.*] There is a possible way out, you know. [*A pause.*]

CYNTHIA [*slowly*]. Yes, I know. [*A longer pause.*]

ALBERT. It's the only way, I'm afraid.

CYNTHIA. Oh, I've been thinking about it ever since she began coming here! You really *do* think it's the right thing for him? The wisest?

ALBERT. I'm sure of it.

CYNTHIA. But could he be happy?

ALBERT. That's the only way he *can* be happy, permanently—if he's free to write his music. That's the most important thing in the end.

CYNTHIA. It seems—and yet I'm afraid you're right.

ALBERT. We only hurt people by being sentimental about them. That's one of the first things a doctor learns. Let's put this through. Will you?

CYNTHIA. Oh, I couldn't!

ALBERT. You can do more than I can. You'll be here, and I've got to go away. And anyway, a woman can always do more than a man about this sort of thing. [*Holds out his hand to her.*] For Neil's sake. [*He takes a step away from her as he hears NEIL returning. NEIL comes back, wearing a dressing gown.*] That's right! Now!

NEIL. Of all the rot! Putting a grown man to bed at half past five!

ALBERT. Who ever accused you of being a grown man? Here! [*Produces a pill.*] Be brave. One swallow and it's over.

NEIL. Oh, all right—give it to me.

ALBERT. Here! [*NEIL takes it.*] And another before you go to bed. I'll put them here. [*He takes up his hat.*]

NEIL. You're going?

ALBERT. Got to—dining uptown. [*Taps NEIL lightly with*

his gloves as he passes.] I'll look in in the morning. You'll be all right then. Good night, Miss Mason.

CYNTHIA. Goodbye, Doctor.

[ALBERT goes.]

NEIL [*to CYNTHIA, who is gathering the last of her dishes*]. He's been talking to you about me, hasn't he?

CYNTHIA. Why—you and other things. [*Not looking up.*]

NEIL. What did he say?

CYNTHIA. Don't you wish you knew—curiosity!

NEIL. I *do* know. I know exactly. He said the same thing to me. He said I was a failure—practically. That I'd have to depend on other people all my life.

CYNTHIA. Neil, you're just exciting yourself. You're tired, and you know he wants you to——

NEIL. No, wait! We've got to talk about this, you and I. He said more than that. He said that I ought to ask Gladys Cady to marry me. [*A pause.*] Well! You don't seem—surprised.

CYNTHIA. No, I'm not.

NEIL. Don't you even think it's—funny, a little bit?

CYNTHIA. No.

NEIL. Cynthia! [*Looks at her for a moment and then with a cry.*] Oh, Cynthia—dear! [*Takes her hand.*]

CYNTHIA. Don't, Neil!—*Please* don't!

NEIL. But Cynthia, don't you know—without my telling you—that I love only you and no one else?

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, please! [*Then, with an attempt at lightness.*] This is so sudden!

NEIL [*hurt*]. Oh, Cynthia, please don't!

CYNTHIA. Oh, please don't *you*!

NEIL. You know I love you, Cynthia! Of course you know; you couldn't help knowing! I thought maybe you—don't you, at all, Cynthia?

CYNTHIA [*regaining control of herself*]. Neil, let me tell you something. I *have* seen that you were growing to care for me, and I've—I've tried to think what I ought to do about it.

NEIL. Do about it! What can you do about it if——

CYNTHIA. You can do lots of things—if you're practical and sensible.

NEIL. Oh, my dear!

CYNTHIA. I said to myself, I think he's beginning to care about me more than he ought to, considering how we're both situated, and that nothing could come of it. And if I stay here I mightn't be sensible either. So, I'm going away.

NEIL. What!

CYNTHIA. I'm going to move uptown and live with Helen Noland. I'm going tomorrow.

NEIL. Cynthia—do you mean that you don't care about me at all?

CYNTHIA. Oh, yes, I do, Neil. I care about you very much. I think you're a great artist.

NEIL. Artist! [*He turns away from her.*]

CYNTHIA. And I think it would be the greatest possible misfortune for your music for you to go on this way, living from hand to mouth. So—when Dr. Rice suggested that you marry Miss Cady, it seemed to me a very sensible thing to do.

NEIL [*faces her again*]. Cynthia—do you know what you're talking about?

CYNTHIA. Perfectly.

NEIL. You can't mean that music or no music I ought to marry Gladys.

CYNTHIA. I think you ought to do just that for the sake of your music.

NEIL [*hurt*]. Oh! You're like Albert! You think my music is the only thing about me that's worth while! [*He again turns away.*]

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil!

NEIL [*continuing*]. It never *was* me that you cared about—only the music.

CYNTHIA. I want you to be happy, Neil.

NEIL [*laughs mirthlessly*]. I certainly got it all wrong, didn't I? [*A pause.*] Well, goodbye, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil! Don't say goodbye like that.

NEIL. What other way is there? You're all being so sen-

sible and practical. I might as well be practical and sensible too. [CYNTHIA starts to speak, chokes up, goes out—stifling her tears. After a moment NEIL turns and sees that she is gone.] My music! [Then, less viciously.] My music! [The telephone bell rings. NEIL looks towards it—plainly, Gladys has finished at the dressmaker's. For a second he hesitates; then he makes up his mind and strides to the telephone. There is grim determination in his voice, from the opening greeting.] Hello, Gladys!

GLADYS [over the telephone]. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. Well, is the fitting over? [He stifles a yawn; the pills are beginning to work.]

GLADYS. Yes, but it wasn't a fitting.

NEIL. Well, whatever it was.

GLADYS. I took the pink one.

NEIL. The pink one. That's fine.

GLADYS. Oh, you don't care which at all!

NEIL. Of course I care which.

GLADYS. Can you meet me?

NEIL. Well, I don't think I can do that.

GLADYS. What?

NEIL. I say I can't go out. The doctor says I must stay in for a while.

GLADYS. Oh, my goodness! Are you sick?

NEIL. Oh, no. Just tired. Really, that's all. I have to—sleep for about an hour. [He is growing momentarily more listless.]

GLADYS. Oh, dear!

NEIL. Well, why don't you come up here instead?

GLADYS. Shall I?

NEIL. Of course.

GLADYS. Why?

NEIL. Well, there's something I want to say to you, to ask you—something we all want to—I mean something I want to ask you—

GLADYS. I wish I knew!

NEIL. Maybe you do know. We thought—that is, I

thought—how would you like to marry a great composer?
[*The receiver nearly falls from his grip.*]

GLADYS. Oh, darling! Do you mean it?

NEIL. Sure I mean it.

GLADYS. Of course I'll marry you!

NEIL. Would you, honestly?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed!

NEIL. Well, that's fine. We'll show them, won't we?

GLADYS. Who?

NEIL. Oh, everybody.

GLADYS. Can I tell them?

NEIL. Yes, tell them all. Homer and——

GLADYS. Oh, darling, I'm so happy!

NEIL [*his tone dull*]. Well, I'm happy, too.

GLADYS. Let me hear you say "Sweetheart."

NEIL. Do I have to say it?

GLADYS. Of course.

NEIL [*barely audible*]. Sweetheart.

GLADYS. Go ahead.

NEIL. Didn't you hear it?

GLADYS. No.

NEIL [*viciously*]. Sweetheart!

GLADYS. Do you love me?

NEIL. Of course I do.

GLADYS. Well, I'll come over in about an hour.

NEIL. All right. [*A sleepy pause.*] In about an hour. You come, and—I'll sleep for an hour. I'll—sleep. [*He tries to replace the receiver, but is too sleepy. It dangles from its cord. NEIL rouses himself from the chair with difficulty.*] And that's that! [*Across the street the jazz orchestra begins again to play "The Frog's Party." It seems louder than before—already NEIL's imagination is causing it to swell. He wheels toward the window.*] Now go ahead and play! [*He staggers to the easy chair and drops into it.*] Play the wedding march, damn you! Play the wedding march! [*The tune resolves itself into a jazzy version of Lohengrin's Wedding March. At the same time NEIL finally collapses into the chair, and the lights of the room begin to go down. As it*

grows dark the music swells. Then, after a moment, it begins to grow light again—but it is no longer NEIL's room. It is a railway station, with the arch of Track 37 prominently visible, and other arches flanking it at the side. A muddled train schedule is printed on the station walls, with strange towns that never existed. NEIL's piano, however, has remained where it was, and so has his easy chair. Then, down the aisles of the lighted theatre, there comes suddenly a double wedding procession. One section is headed by MR. CADY and GLADYS—MR. CADY in golf knickers and socks, knitted vest, and frock coat, with a silk hat prominently on his arm. GLADYS is the gorgeously attired bride, bearing proudly a bouquet that consists entirely of banknotes. Behind them stream four ushers—spats, frock coats, and high hats, to say nothing of huge bridal veils, draped over their heads. If you could peer beneath their veils, however, you would find that all four of them look just alike. The procession that comes down the other aisle is headed by MRS. CADY and HOMER. MRS. CADY wears a grotesque exaggeration of the dress that NEIL has seen her in, and HOMER's yellow tie has assumed tremendous proportions. Behind MRS. CADY and HOMER are four bandsmen. Like the ushers, they all look alike, all wearing bridal veils, through which they play their instruments.]

[At the foot of the stage the processions halt; the music stops. ALBERT appears from nowhere in particular; he has turned into a minister.]

GLADYS. Oh, Neil!

NEIL [in his sleep]. Huh?

[ALBERT gently rouses him.]

ALBERT. Neil! Did you forget that you were being married today?

NEIL. Oh! Why—I'm afraid I did. [He looks wonderingly at the railway station, then turns and sees GLADYS.] Oh, hello, Gladys! I'm sorry. [The two processions stream up onto the stage. The ushers and the bandsmen line up behind the CADY family.]

GLADYS. Neil, I want you to meet my ushers. They're all

boys I used to know pretty well. [*As GLADYS begins the introductions the entire thing turns into a rhythmic chant, to an orchestral accompaniment.*] This is Alf and this is Georgie.

NEIL. Glad to meet you!

ALF. Glad to meet you!

GLADYS. This is Steve.

NEIL. I'm glad to meet you!

GLADYS. This is Fatty.

NEIL. How d'you do?

GLADYS. This is Lou.

LOU. I'm glad to meet you!

NEIL. Glad to meet you!

LOU. Glad to meet you!

GLADYS. And this last is Cousin Harry.

HARRY. Glad to meet you!

NEIL. How d'you do?

CADY. Hurry up, now! Let's get at it!

ALBERT. Take this man to be your husband?

[*A trainman, in uniform, enters through the gates of the railway station.*]

TRAINMAN. Wolverine, for Monte Carlo!

ALBERT. Have and hold him . . .

GLADYS. Yes, I do!

[*They all begin to rise and fall on their toes, to the beat of the music.*]

ALBERT. All your worldly goods and chattels. . . .

[*A trainboy, carrying the usual magazines, chocolates, etc., comes through the gates.*]

TRAINBOY. Latest magazines and papers!

MRS. CADY. Going off to leave her mama!

HOMER. Say, it's cold here! Ah, ker-choo!

[*The ushers begin to march around GLADYS and NEIL, faster and faster.*]

CADY. Train pulls out in just a minute!

ALBERT. Both for richer and for richer. . . .

TRAINMAN. Pasadena, Paris, London!

ALBERT. Better, worser . . .

GLADYS. Sure I will!

CADY. Special car Appolinaris!

[GLADYS is kissing the ushers as they march.]

TRAINBOY. Nothing sold after the train leaves!

MRS. CADY. Don't know *what* I'll do without her!

TRAINMAN. Show your tickets!

HOMER. Ma, keep still!

CADY. Get aboard! I'll tip the preacher!

TRAINMAN. Right this way, please! Right this way, please!

TRAINBOY. Huyler's chocolates and bon-bons!

MRS. CADY. Oh, my baby!

HOMER. Oh, good Lord!

TRAINMAN. Lenox, Palm Beach, Narragansett!

ALBERT. I pronounce you—got the ring, Neil?

ALL THE USHERS. Bet he's lost it! Bet he's lost it!

GLADYS. Here's another!

TRAINMAN. All aboard!

[*The procession starts through the gates—ALBERT and CADY first, then the rest of the CADYS, then the ushers and the bandmen. As they all file through the ushers continue the chant, calling out in unison:*]

Well, goodbye! Congratulations!

Goodbye, Gladys! Goodbye, Gladys!

Send us back a picture postal!

Hope you're happy!

Well, goodbye!

[GLADYS tosses her bouquet back to them; the ushers scramble for the banknotes. As the last of the procession disappears through the doors the lights die down. A moment later they come up again, revealing a row of white marble columns, with crimson curtains hung between them. NEIL's piano, however, is still incongruously in the left corner, and his easy chair stands at the right. Immediately NEIL and GLADYS enter through side curtains. NEIL is still wearing his bathrobe—a somewhat sad spectacle amid all this grandeur. GLADYS is no longer in bridal costume, but wears

a pleated dress—an exaggeration of the dress that she has worn in real life, with great pleats several inches thick.]

GLADYS. We're married, Neil!

NEIL. Yes.

GLADYS. I'm your little bride.

NEIL. My little bride.

GLADYS [*giggles*]. Isn't it all just too wonderful? [*Runs into his arms.*] This is our beautiful home—see! [*The curtains behind the front columns part, revealing a magnificent interior consisting entirely of more marble columns and velvet curtains.*] You're going to have everything you've always needed! Mama and papa both say so!

NEIL. Oh! Do they?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed! You just wait—they'll be here any minute!

NEIL. They're coming here?

GLADYS. Of course they are! There're a lot of people coming—all coming to see our beautiful new home! Wait a minute—I'll show you! [*Calls.*] Butlers! [*Two butlers appear. They are exactly alike.*] Announce somebody!

THE TWO BUTLERS. Mrs. Cady and her chair and knitting! [*MRS. CADY enters with a rocking chair attached to her. She begins knitting immediately. The two butlers depart.*]

MRS. CADY. Two little lovebirds! Gladys and Neil! Gladys and Neil! Are they happy? Oh, my dear, you never saw anyone so happy! I was saying to Mr. Cady, "Well, Mr. Cady, what do you think of your little daughter now?" [*She sits.*] How's this for a happy family?" And Mr. Cady says to me, "Well, I never would have believed it." And I says to Mr. Cady, and Mr. Cady says to me, and I says to Mr. Cady, and Mr. Cady says to me, and I says——

NEIL. Stop! [*MRS. CADY stops.*] So—so you're my wife's mother?

GLADYS. Why, of course she is! I think she's a pretty nice mother-in-law, don't you? Most people don't like their mothers-in-law, but I think *she's* pretty nice.

NEIL. But is she going to be—always——

GLADYS. Yes, indeed! Won't it be lovely? And that isn't all! [*Calls.*] Butlers! [*Four butlers enter.*]

THE FOUR BUTLERS. Mr. Cady, her father!

[*MR. CADY enters. He is in complete golf attire, and there is a telephone attached to his chest. As he enters the butlers depart.*]

CADY [*into the telephone*]. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! Sell eighteen holes and buy all the water hazards. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! I expect caddies will go up any time now. How's the eighth hole this morning? Uh-huh. Well, sell it in three. Yes, sir. That's fine. Yep! Yep! Hullo! Well, I'll tell you what to do! Buy——

NEIL. No, no! [*CADY stops; looks at NEIL.*] You must stop—both of you! Do you know me?

CADY. My son! My new son! Well, Neil, how's the nice music and everything? Making a lot of money?

NEIL. Are we all going to live together?

GLADYS. Yes, indeed, darling.

CADY. Yes, indeed.

MRS. CADY. Yes, indeed.

GLADYS. And that isn't all. [*Six butlers enter. Of course they are all alike.*] I've another surprise for you!

THE SIX BUTLERS. Her brother, Homer. He makes me sick.

FIRST BUTLER. I don't think *he's* sick at all. [*The butlers go. HOMER enters—the yellow tie is bigger than ever.*]

HOMER. Oh, there you are, you dirty dog! I'm on to you! You married her just because Dad's got a lot of money, and you think you're going to have a cinch. But if you think you're going to get all of Dad's money, you're mistaken, because I'm going to get my share and don't you forget it. [*He makes straight for the easy chair, sits in it, and sneezes.*]

MRS. CADY. Now, Homer! Homer's sick.

CADY. Yes, he's sick.

GLADYS. It's all right, dearest.

NEIL. It isn't all right. I don't want the money. All I

want to do is write my music. That's what I want to do—work. Do you think I'll be able to?

GLADYS. Why, of course you will, dear. We've just had this whole room done over for you to work in.

MRS. CADY. It's awfully pretty, Neil.

CADY. Cost a lot of money, too. [*His telephone rings.*] Hello! . . . No—wrong number! [*He hangs up.*]

GLADYS. Don't you just love it, Neil, keeping house together? Say "Sweetheart!"

NEIL [*automatically*]. Sweetheart.

GLADYS. And next week we're going to have everything done over in some *other* color. Here are the samples—the samples. [*She produces another set of samples, larger than those used in real life.*] Now which color would you like? It's going to be whichever color you like.

NEIL. Why, any one. [*He removes the samples from his arm.*]

HOMER. Make him pick one! Make him pick one!

GLADYS. Here, I'll tell you! You stop in and get them matched! Get some of this one, and some of that one, and maybe some of the other one—on your way home from business tomorrow. It'll give you something to do.

NEIL. Am I going to business tomorrow?

CADY. Yes, sir! Start right in at the bottom and work up. Learn all the ins and outs. Lots of people think the ins and outs don't amount to anything; but you can't get anywhere in business without them.

NEIL. But if I have to go to business tomorrow I'd like to work on my symphony now—if you'll only go.

HOMER. Huh! The symphony!

GLADYS. That old thing!

CADY. That's no good!

MRS. CADY. I wouldn't have it in the house!

NEIL. But it is good—and I've got to finish it.

CADY. Highbrow music—that's what it is.

NEIL. Well, then, I'll work on the pantomime—that's not so highbrow. [*He goes to the piano.*]

MRS. CADY. For my part I like hymns. There's nothing

like the old familiar hymns. [*She sings—"Oh, Blessed Be the Tie That Binds."*]

GLADYS. Anyhow, you can't work now. It's tea time!

MRS. CADY [*to the tune of the hymn*]. Yes, tea time! It's tea time! It's tea time!

CADY. So it is. [*Into his telephone.*] Hello! . . . Don't disturb me now—I'm busy. . . . Tea!

CADY. Quite a crowd coming this afternoon.

MRS. CADY. Yes, coming to meet Neil! Yes, Gladys and Neil! Gladys and Neil!

GLADYS. Now, Neil, you be nice to everybody. I want you to make a nice impression. [*Eight butlers enter.*]

THE EIGHT BUTLERS. A friend of her family's. [*The butlers go. No one enters, but apparently the CADYS see someone. They greet the invisible guest.*]

GLADYS. How do you do?

CADY. How do you do? [*They bring her down to MRS. CADY.*]

MRS. CADY. How do you do? Oh, what a nice new ear trumpet!

GLADYS. I'm so glad you were able to come! [*NEIL peers, trying his best to see what it is all about.*]

MRS. CADY. Well, it's wonderful to see you again!

GLADYS. Doesn't she look well, mama?

MRS. CADY. You're the picture of health! No one would ever say *you* had an operation. I say—no one would ever say you had an operation. Yes, it always does it if you were heavy before. Oh, was it a year ago? Well, tempus does fugit, as Homer says. You remember Homer?

HOMER. I said hello.

MRS. CADY. Homer's sick.

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! I want you to meet an old friend of mama's. She's deaf. You'll have to talk loud.

[*Ten butlers enter.*]

THE TEN BUTLERS. Another friend of the family's! [*The butlers go.*]

GLADYS [*greeting the newcomer*]. How do you do?

CADY. How do you do?

GLADYS. So glad to see you again. And little Hattie! Oh, look, mama! *[Cady and Gladys bend over, as though greeting a child.]*

MRS. CADY. Why, if it isn't little Hattie! Look, Gladys! Isn't she cunning?

GLADYS. Isn't she? Those cute little curls! Do you want to meet your great big cousin Neilie? Neil, darling, this is your little cousin Hattie. Isn't she a big girl? Say something cute to her. *[Gladys turns away from Neil and he passes his foot over the spot where the child is supposed to be.]*

[Twelve butlers enter.]

THE TWELVE BUTLERS. A great many other friends of the family.

FIRST BUTLER. And all pretty terrible, if you ask me. *[They go.]*

CADY. Hello, Alf! You remember Mrs. Cady?

HOMER. Hello, Fatty.

MRS. CADY. How do you do?

CADY. Say, I called you up a couple times but couldn't get any answer.

GLADYS. Why, how do you do, Alf? I'm awfully glad you were able to come. Oh, Neil! I want you to meet an old friend of papa's. He's known me ever since I was—how high? Yes, but you couldn't lift me now. *[The invisible guest tries to lift her and fails. She giggles.]*

[Butlers enter with imaginary trays.]

MRS. CADY. And now we'll have some nice tea to drink.

HOMER *[probably to FATTY]*. He married Gladys for her money.

MRS. CADY. And then Neil will play for us.

GLADYS. Oh, hello! Haven't seen you in a long time! No, I guess I wasn't engaged then.

[It is a Babel. The CADYS are all speaking together, moving around and greeting guests. NEIL moves through it all, walking through guests, passing his hands through the butlers' trays—bewildered.]

CADY. Oh, hello, Ralph. I want you to meet my new son-in-law. Neil, this is Mr. Umn.

GLADYS. Oh, have you been out to California? Did it rain much?

CADY. Yes, he's going to be very valuable to me in business, too.

HOMER. I'll bet he's rotten.

CADY. But after all there's nothing like business. It'll all be his when I retire—his and Homer's, his and Homer's. [*Slaps NEIL on back.*]

[*The following four speeches are spoken simultaneously.*]

MRS. CADY. Well, Miss Mmmm, you know Mmm, don't you? He's a cousin of John's who knew Francis very well. She's Ted's aunt. Yes. It's such a long time since you've been to see us. Gladys is always saying: "Mama, why is it Mrs. Mmm doesn't come and visit us, or why don't we go out and see her?" and all like that. You know Mrs. Mmm, don't you? You've become very plump, or you've become very thin. You don't mind my not getting up, do you? Mr. Cady always says I'm chair-bound. But that's his way of making a joke. He's always making a joke. You know Neil, of course. Would you like to have Neil play for us? Would you like to have Neil play for us? Neil, play for us.

HOMER. Look at him, the dirty dog! He married her for her money all right, but if he thinks he's going to get it he's got another think coming. Pop's going to put him in the business! Huh! He thinks he's going to get the business, too. Well, I'll show him—the dirty dog! He isn't going to get the business away from me—not while I'm alive and kicking. All because he's a musician. Yes, he thinks he plays the piano. Well—let him play it and see if I care. I dare him to play it. Go on and play for us.

MR. CADY. Well, well, well! You know Judge Mmm of course. Old man, I want you to meet the Judge. Yes, they've got a very beautiful home here. Would you like a cocktail, eh? Yes, sir! Well, Judge, how's everything been going? Say, you know Mr. Mmm, don't you? How are you? How have you been all these years? Have a cocktail

—that's the boy. Yes, she's a big girl now. Grown up—married. That's her husband there. That's the one I bought for her. Very talented. I'll get him to play. Neil, we'd like to hear you play. Come on, Neil, play something on the piano.

GLADYS. Oh, how do you do, Aunt Gertrude? You know Willie, of course. Willie, you remember Aunt Gertrude. Aunt Gertrude, you remember Willie. Yes, this is our beautiful home. My husband's very talented. No, you didn't interrupt him a bit. He's awfully glad you came. He wasn't going to do anything this afternoon. Anyway, we always have tea. And if it isn't tea, it's something else. We're always having such a good time, Neil and I. Yes, that's my husband there. He plays the piano beautifully. Shall I get him to play? I think he would if I ask him. Oh, Neil, darling, play something. Please, Neil! Neil, for my sake, you'll play, won't you?

[MR. and MRS. CADY, GLADYS and HOMER reach the
"Come on and play" lines simultaneously.]

THE CADYS. Play something for us! Play something for us! Play something for us!

NEIL [*in quiet desperation*]. All right. [*Crosses to piano, seats himself and turns on them.*] I'll play, but I'll play what I want to—and I don't think you'll like it.

[*He plays—music that is soft and flowing, and reminiscent of CYNTHIA. The lights fade on the CADYS and their reception; the curtains fall. Through the window by the piano comes CYNTHIA.*]

NEIL [*as he continues playing*]. Cynthia! I thought that would bring you—I hoped so.

CYNTHIA. Of course, Neil, dear.

NEIL. Cynthia, it was a mistake! I'm terribly unhappy!

CYNTHIA. I'm so sorry, Neil. Because I want you to be happy, always.

NEIL. But I can't be happy with these people. I should have married you, Cynthia. I wanted to, you remember? But you wouldn't. And now it's too late.

CYNTHIA. Yes, it's too late. And I'm sorry, too.

NEIL. I don't want you to be sorry, Cynthia. I don't want you to regret anything. It was all my own fault. [NEIL'S music turns to jazz as he plays.]

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, don't let your music do that! [She begins to draw back into the window.]

NEIL [*desperately, as the music becomes more and more jazzy*]. I can't help it! It's these people. I'm trying—but I can't help it. [CYNTHIA'S image begins to fade.] No—no! Don't leave me, Cynthia! I need you! Don't leave me with these people! They don't understand! They never can understand! [But CYNTHIA is gone now. NEIL ends the jazz music with a treble crash, and buries his head on the keyboard. Immediately MR. CADY enters—his hat on and a morning newspaper in his hand.]

CADY [*as he passes*]. Hurry up, Neil! Mustn't be late for business. [An elevator man, the same who was the trainman during the wedding scene, enters from the other side and meets MR. CADY at centre.] Good morning, Jerry.

ELEVATOR MAN. Good morning, Mr. Cady. Express elevator going up! Watch your step!

[NEIL looks up. There is no elevator, but this time even NEIL is persuaded, and he believes that he sees it. Four business men, all with hats and newspapers, and all looking just alike, enter one at a time and step into the imaginary elevator.]

CADY [*to the first of them*]. Good morning! Made it in twenty-eight minutes this morning!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I got the eight-six this morning!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I missed the seven-forty-three.

THIRD BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I always take the nine-two.

FOURTH BUSINESS MAN. Good morning! I thought you were on the eight-sixteen. [NEIL gets into the car; the men huddle together.]

STARTER [*clicking his signal*]. All right! Twentieth floor first stop!

CADY. No, sir, I wouldn't sell under a million five! No, sir, a million five! Oh, good morning, Neil!

NEIL. Well, I'm starting.

CADY. Good boy, Neil! I want you to meet some of my associates. This is my son-in-law, gentlemen. Just bought him for my daughter. Mr. Canoo, statistical department.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Four out!

[As MR. CADY thus introduces him the FIRST BUSINESS MAN walks out of the elevator, and goes off, paying no attention to NEIL, who nods at his retreating back.]

CADY. Mr. Deloo, traffic department.

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Five out! [He goes.]

CADY. Mr. Meloo, tax department!

THIRD BUSINESS MAN. Six out! [He goes.]

CADY. Mr. Beloo, general department.

FOURTH BUSINESS MAN. Eight out. [He goes.]

CADY. Well, well, Neil, starting in to work? You'll like it. You'll learn the ins and outs in no time. Hey! Wait a minute. I said nine out! [He goes.]

NEIL. Excuse me, Jerry! Can you tell me where I can learn the Ins and Outs?

STARTER. Ins and Outs Department! Room three hundred and thirty-three and one-third. Try and find it. [He goes.]

NEIL. Thank you.

[The curtains between the marble columns at right part. A small office is disclosed. MISS HEY, a stenographer, is typing at a small desk behind a railing.]

NEIL. I beg your pardon?

MISS HEY. Well?

NEIL. I want a pencil.

MISS HEY [still typing]. What is it?

NEIL. I want a pencil.

MISS HEY. Who sent you?

NEIL. I don't know. But I have to have a pencil. I worked in a place like this once before. I had a great deal of difficulty getting a pencil then, I remember.

MISS HEY. It's just as hard to get one here.

NEIL. I thought it would be. I suppose there's a lot of red tape to go through.

MISS HEY [*turning toward him*]. Yes. Now as I understand it, you want a pencil.

NEIL. That's right.

MISS HEY. Of course you've filled out a requisition.

NEIL. No, I haven't. A piece of paper, isn't it? [*She hands him a tremendous sheet of paper. It is about twenty by thirty inches. He studies it.*] What I want is a pencil. There's a place for that to be put in, I suppose?

MISS HEY [*wearily*]. Yes—where it says: "The undersigned wishes a pencil to do some work with." How old are you?

NEIL. Thirty-two.

MISS HEY [*taking the paper away*]. That's the wrong form. [*She gives him another—a blue one this time.*] Parents living?

NEIL. No.

MISS HEY. What did you do with your last pencil?

NEIL. I didn't have any.

MISS HEY. Did you have any before that?

NEIL. I don't think I ever had any. [*He indicates the form.*] Is that all right?

MISS HEY. It isn't as regular as we like, but I guess it'll do.

NEIL. What do I do now? Go to someone else, don't I?

MISS HEY. Oh, yes. Sometimes you travel for days.

NEIL. Are we all crazy?

MISS HEY. Yes. [*She resumes typing.*] You might try Room E—right down the corridor.

[*The curtains close over her, and the curtains at the left simultaneously open, revealing another office, just like the first. Another stenographer, Miss You, is at work on a typewriter. NEIL approaches her, requisition in hand.*]

NEIL. Is this Room E?

MISS YOU [*mechanically*]. Did you have an appointment?

NEIL. No—you don't understand. I'm trying to get a pencil.

MISS YOU. Well, what do you want to see him about?

NEIL [*handing over the requisition*]. It's this. Somebody has to sign it.

MISS YOU. [*Takes requisition.*] Oh! [*Looks at it.*] Mr. Bippy! The man is here to see about getting a pencil or something.

NEIL. It is a pencil.

MISS YOU. Did you see Mr. Schlink?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Mr. Woodge?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Mr. Meglup?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. What did *they* say?

NEIL. Why, they seemed to think it would be all right.

MISS YOU. [*Calls again.*] Oh, Mr. Bippy! [*To NEIL.*] Belong to the Employes' Mutual Mutual?

NEIL. Oh, yes.

MISS YOU. Cady Golf and Building Fund?

NEIL. Yes.

MISS YOU. Well—all right. [*She stamps the requisition with an elaborate machine, which rings a bell as it works. She hands the paper back to NEIL.*]

NEIL. Oh, thanks. Do I get a pencil now?

MISS YOU. Oh, no! It has to be O.K.'d by the President. All requisitions have to be O.K.'d by the President.

NEIL. Is he around here some place?

MISS YOU. Oh, no! He's in a big office. Just keep going until you find a great big office.

NEIL. Where?

MISS YOU. Oh, somewhere in the new building. Mr. Bippy!

[*NEIL turns away. The curtains close.*]

NEIL. The new building. A big office.

[The centre curtains open, revealing a larger office. MR. CADY, seated at a long table, is dictating, in alternate sentences, to MISS YOU, MISS HEY, and to a dictaphone which stands before him.]

[NEIL tries to attract MISS HEY's attention.]

SIMULTANEOUSLY

NEIL.

[To MISS YOU.]

I beg your pardon. . . .
[To MISS HEY.] I beg your
 pardon . . . would you mind
 if I—is this the President's
 office? Excuse me. . . . Ex-
 cuse me.

MISS HEY.

[To NEIL.]

Well, what is it?

NEIL.

I want to see the President.

MISS HEY.

What do you want to see
 him about?

CADY.

[Dictating.]

And so beg to state—yours
 of the 19th instant—hoping
 to receive your valued order
 —yours received and would
 say—our Mr. Mmm will call
 on you—in re our No. 2160—
 yours sincerely—annual sales
 convention—beg to state—
 beg to state—beg to state—
 pursuant to your instructions
 of the 13th ultimo—F.O.B.
 our factory—beg to state—
 beg to state—beg to state—
 as per your terms and speci-
 fications—would say—would
 say——

*[By this time, hearing
 NEIL's voice, CADY
 turns.]*

CADY. Why, Neil!

NEIL. Here I am—at work!

CADY. Yes, sir! Business! Big business!

NEIL. Yes. Big business. What business are we in?

CADY. Widgets. We're in the widget business.

NEIL. The widget business?

CADY. Yes, sir! I suppose I'm the biggest manufacturer
 in the world of overhead and underground A-erial widgets.
 Miss You!

MISS YOU. Yes, sir.

CADY. Let's hear what our business was during the first six months of the fiscal year. [To NEIL.] The annual report.

MISS YOU [reading]. "The turnover in the widget industry last year was greater than ever. If placed alongside the Woolworth Building, it would stretch to the moon. The operating expenses alone would furnish every man, woman and child in the United States, China, and similar places with enough to last for eighteen and one-half years, if laid end to end."

CADY. How's that?

NEIL. It's wonderful!

CADY. And wait for September 17th!

NEIL. Why?

CADY. That's to be National Widget Week! The whole country!

NEIL. That's fine, but what I came up about——

CADY. Never mind that now—we've got more important things. Conferences, mostly. [To MISS HEY and MISS YOU.] Any good conferences on for today?

MISS HEY AND MISS YOU [together]. One at 3:19 this afternoon. [They go.]

CADY. That's fine! Ever been to a conference, Neil?

NEIL. No, but I've heard a lot about them.

CADY. They're great! You make speeches and decide things, and nobody can get in while they're going on.

[MISS YOU and MISS HEY re-enter excitedly.]

MISS YOU and MISS HEY. All ready! They're going to start the conference, the conference, the conference! [They rush out.]

CADY. Fine! Come right in, gentlemen!

[Half a dozen business men enter. They wear clothes that suggest fatness and prosperity. They walk in stiffly, in a line, repeating the phrases "Overhead," "Turnover," "Annual Report," "Overhead," "Turnover," "Annual Report." They sit, in stiff poses.]

We are going to have a conference! [Calls off.] Bolt the doors, out there! Gentlemen—this is our annual quarterly

meeting. [*He drops a gold piece in front of each man.*] I want to introduce a young man who has been showing great promise in our factory. I don't know what he will have to say to you——

NEIL. I know what to say! [*Rises.*] I remember now—I know exactly what to say!

CADY. Gentlemen, Mr. Neil McRae!

[*As NEIL rises to speak the men all fall into mechanical positions, reminiscent of the board of directors pictures in the advertisements. NEIL pounds the table occasionally during his speech, but there is no sound.*]

NEIL. I know you must be surprised to see so young a man stand up before you, but I have *trained* myself to occupy the position I am now in. I have learned my facts. That is how I happen to own my own home. It simply took up my spare time in the evenings. Then, one day, the head of the factory came through the room where I happened to be working on a very difficult piece of machinery. "Who is that?" he asked the foreman. "He seems to be brighter than the others." "Not at all," answered the foreman. "He has simply applied himself and I think we must raise his pay, if we want to hold him." A few weeks later I was able to solve in five minutes a problem that had puzzled the best brains in our organization. I am now the head of my department, and my old foreman is working under me.

[*NEIL sits; there is applause; the men lean over and shake his hand, congratulating him.*]

BUSINESS MEN. Wonderful! Wonderful!

CADY. I knew he could do it! Gentlemen, he has saved us millions!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Why, he is going to be the biggest man in the organization.

OTHERS. Yes! The very biggest!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. What do you say to signing up with us for ten years at half a million dollars a year?

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. And becoming sales manager?

CADY. How about a bonus?

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. Yes, a bonus!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Here's my check for one hundred thousand dollars!

CADY. And here's mine! Two hundred thousand dollars.

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. And mine for one hundred thousand!

OTHER BUSINESS MEN. And mine—one hundred and fifty thousand dollars!

NEIL. Oh, thank you, thank you! [*He looks at the checks; they are of various-colored paper—pink, blue, yellow.*] It's an awful lot of money, isn't it?

CADY. A million dollars!

NEIL. A million dollars!

CADY. Well, gentlemen, that was a dandy conference!

FIRST BUSINESS MAN. One of the best!

CADY. Let's have another!

SECOND BUSINESS MAN. Yes, another.

[*CADY hands out gold pieces again as the curtains close in. NEIL, however, has stepped out of the scene and stands facing the audience. Curtains fall behind him.*]

NEIL. Just think, a million dollars. [*He looks at the checks in his hand, but they have turned into samples of colored cloth.*] Blue and pink and yellow. Blue and yellow and pink. I was to match them. I know! I was to match them for——

GLADYS [*heard in the distance*]. Oh, Neil!

NEIL. For Gladys! [*Then, mechanically.*] Sweetheart!

[*GLADYS, resplendent in evening dress and wrap, joins him.*]

GLADYS. Did you have a hard day at the office, Neil?

NEIL. Here they are. It's a million dollars—I think.

GLADYS. Oh, good. I always knew you'd be a big success, Neil.

NEIL [*dully*]. But I'm not doing what I want to do. My music—I want to write my music.

GLADYS. Oh, not now! It's time to go somewhere! We're going to dance!

NEIL. No, no! I've got to write my music. I want to go home now!

GLADYS. Oh, nobody ever goes home. We're going to go and dance!

NEIL. But we've got to eat dinner first!

GLADYS. Of course! We're going to eat right here!

NEIL. In this restaurant again? But we were here last night, and the night before. You don't want to come here every night, do you?

GLADYS. Why, of course I do! Suppose it is expensive, you can afford it now! And nobody comes here but the best people! We'll come here every night from now on! They have the nicest little lamps on the table!

[A check-room boy enters from one side and a headwaiter from the other. A second glance reveals the fact that the headwaiter is ALBERT. The check boy takes GLADY'S wrap and NEIL'S bathrobe.]

ALBERT. Bon soir. *[Holds up two fingers.]* How many, please?

NEIL. Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL. *[Counts them.]* Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL. Why, hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. Oh, yes! You were a waiter at college, weren't you? You know Gladys?

GLADYS. Of course.

[ALBERT and GLADYS shake hands. Then ALBERT immediately becomes again the formal waiter.]

ALBERT. How many, please?

NEIL. Two.

ALBERT. Two?

NEIL. *[Looks around to see if a third has mysteriously appeared.]* Yes—two.

ALBERT. I will see if I can find you a table. *[He consults his chart.]* All our reserved tables are reserved.

[The centre curtains part, revealing a gaudy cabaret interior. In the centre, at the rear, is a window, set in a frame of wrought iron. There is a single table, set with

much fancy glassware and two table lamps of the sort so dear to GLADYS'S heart. As this scene is revealed an unseen orchestra strikes up the jazz tune, "The Frog's Party."]

Ah! Right this way, please! Here is a nice one—right by the window! [*He seats them with an elaborate flourish, simultaneously uttering the meaningless ritual of headwaiters everywhere.*] Yes, Madame! Yes, sir!

[*A cigarette girl, Spanish in attire, enters and circles around the table.*]

GIRL. Cigars and cigarettes! Cigars and cigarettes!

[*ALBERT presents the menu, a huge affair, to NEIL.*]

GLADYS. See, Neil? Isn't it wonderful? [*She sways to the music.*] Order! He's waiting! Hurry up—you've got to order!

NEIL [*scanning the card*]. I—I can't decide right away.

GLADYS. Oh, that music! I can't stand it any longer! [*She rises and seizes ALBERT.*] Dance? [*She whirls around the table with him, to the accompaniment of the jazz tune and the cigarette girl's chorus of "cigars, cigarettes."*]

ALBERT [*when the dance is over*]. Perhaps Madame would care for some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise, or some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise, or some Bordelaise à la Bordelaise.

GLADYS. Why, yes—I'd like that!

ALBERT. And what will Monsieur have?

NEIL [*studying card*]. What is Bordelaise à la Bordelaise?

ALBERT. Very nice, sir.

NEIL. Yes, I know, but what is it?

ALBERT. It's served in a little round dish—very nice.

NEIL. Can't I find out what it is?

ALBERT. I'll see if anybody knows, sir. [*He turns his back.*]

GLADYS. Neil!

NEIL. Well?

GLADYS. People don't do that—making a scene in a restaurant!

NEIL. I only want to know what it is.

GLADYS. But you must pretend that you *do* know! *That's* the thing.

[ALBERT turns back to NEIL.]

ALBERT. I'm sorry, sir—nobody knows.

NEIL. It doesn't matter. I'll take it.

ALBERT. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

[Four waiters enter, with dishes.]

GLADYS. Oh, here's dinner!

[The waiters circle the table, clanking the lids of their dishes as they exhibit the food. They go slowly at first, then faster and faster, in time to the constantly accelerating music.]

NEIL [springing up]. Stop! I can't stand it!

[The waiters halt in their tracks; the music stops.]

Is it going to be like this always?

GLADYS. What?

NEIL. Our life!

[ALBERT dismisses the waiters.]

GLADYS. Why, I think it's wonderful! You're going ahead being a big success in papa's office, and every night we'll go out and dance! You'll have to learn!

NEIL. I won't dance! I don't want to dance! I wouldn't ever have had to dance if I hadn't married you! [It gives him a thought.] If I hadn't married you——

GLADYS. Well, I don't care whether you dance or not. I'm going to! Albert—— [She rises and seizes ALBERT; they dance off.] If you hadn't married me you'd have starved to death—starved to death—starved to death—— [Her voice dies down in the distance as she and ALBERT dance off to the accompaniment of the jazz tune. As NEIL starts the next speech the jazz tune slowly changes into the CYNTHIAN theme, and at the same time the gaudy cabaret changes into a sunny cottage.]

NEIL. I don't think so. I might have been poor, but we'd both have work to do. It's a small house, I know, but the sun finds it the first thing every morning. And flowers live longer in our windows than anywhere else, because she cares for them so.

[*The wrought-iron window has turned into a simple thing of chintzes; chintz curtains appear in the doorways, and a box of jonquils takes its place at the foot of the window. The table no longer contains restaurant silver and electric lamps, but is simply furnished with a few breakfast things, with a vase of jonquils to keep them company. The place is flooded with sunlight.*]

NEIL [*calling*]. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA! I'm coming!

NEIL. Are you coming, or must I use force?

CYNTHIA. It's the toast machine. You sit down and begin.

NEIL. As though I ever begin without you! Besides, I have something beautiful for you.

[*CYNTHIA enters, bringing a tray laden with breakfast.*]
See what I've done!

CYNTHIA. What?

NEIL. Nothing at all! Merely created an utterly beautiful morning!

CYNTHIA. You did? I started it an hour ago.

NEIL. Perhaps; but see those little powder-puff clouds? *They* weren't there ten minutes ago.

CYNTHIA. *They are* nice, darling. I didn't think you were so clever.

NEIL. And wait till you see the sunset I'm planning.

CYNTHIA. You can't beat last night's. What a scarlet!

NEIL. It blushed because we flattered it so. [*A pause.*]

CYNTHIA. Darling.

NEIL. What?

CYNTHIA. A letter.

[*They stare at the envelope corner.*]

NEIL. Didn't you dare open it?

CYNTHIA. No. But let's be brave.

[*They hold hands and take a long breath.*]

Now—one, two, three!

[*They tear the letter open; read it in silence.*]

Do you believe it? [*The voice is ecstatic.*]

NEIL. No! Do you?

CYNTHIA. Darling!

NEIL. Darling!

CYNTHIA. But it *must* be real—it's typewritten.

CYNTHIA AND NEIL [*reading in unison*]. "Your symphony will be played by our orchestra on December the tenth."

NEIL. Darling!

CYNTHIA. Darling! They'll applaud and applaud! You'll have to come out and bow!

NEIL. I won't!

CYNTHIA. You'll have to have a new dress suit!

NEIL. And you'll have to have a new evening dress—yellow chiffon, too. I can do their damned orchestrations now. I can do a hundred of them between now and October.

CYNTHIA. No, you won't.

NEIL. But, my youngest child, we must continue to eat.

CYNTHIA. But, my dear, we're extremely wealthy. Have you seen my new housekeeping book?

NEIL. No.

CYNTHIA. Look! I ruled every one of those columns myself.

NEIL [*rises*]. Oh! Sit down!

CYNTHIA. That's why my middle finger is all red.

[NEIL *kisses her finger*.]

This is serious. This is finance. Listen! [*Reading from book*.] "To Mrs. Neil McRae—debtor. Ninety-seven dozen eggs from the little red hen at seventy-nine a dozen—ninety-seven, seventy-nine. Four hundred and forty-six quarts of milk from the little dun cow at sixty-four—four hundred and sixty-four. Thirty-six pots of jonquils sold Mr. Frost, the florist, at thirty-six sixty-six—six sixty-six, sixty-six." And there's the total!

NEIL. But, Cynthia, that can't be right; it's impossible!

CYNTHIA. Add it up for yourself.

NEIL. Sixty-three and eight are forty-two——

CYNTHIA. Neil, you may be one of the minor gods, but you can't add. [*Takes pencil*.] There! Look!

NEIL. But that means——

CYNTHIA. It means we're billionaires, that's all.

NEIL. We have a hundred and seventy-seven dollars and—seventy-seven cents?

CYNTHIA [*nods*]. And we can keep on just as we have been doing.

NEIL. Cynthia, do you suppose *any* two people *ever*? [*He kisses her.*]

CYNTHIA. No, I don't believe *any* two people *ever*.

[*The voice of GLADYS comes out of the distance, faintly.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Ne-il!

CYNTHIA. What is it, dear?

NEIL. I thought I heard someone calling.

CYNTHIA. You did that last night at tea time. I'm frightened.

NEIL. You mustn't be—there are no fears in this house.

GLADYS [*louder this time—the same old call*]. Oh, Ne-il!

NEIL. Cynthia, it's calling me!

CYNTHIA. What?

NEIL. I don't know. I must go to it. [*He steps out of the cottage.*]

CYNTHIA. I'll go along! [*The voice grows weaker as GLADYS'S gets stronger.*]

NEIL. You can't, my dear! It's too absurd.

[*The curtains close on the cottage; the jazz begins again.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Ne-il!

CYNTHIA [*faintly*]. O-o-o-h!

NEIL. Yes, what is it?

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! [*GLADYS enters—so do the check boy, the cigarette girl, ALBERT, and the four waiters. They stand in a line with outstretched palms.*]

NEIL. Yes, what is it?

[*GLADYS, as she speaks, dances with each waiter in turn.*]

GLADYS. Come on, sweetheart! We're going home now! Tip the waiters! Tip the waiters!

NEIL. For heaven's sake stop that dancing!

GLADYS. I should say not! Tip the waiters! Tip them big! Tip them big! [*She dances off with the last of the waiters.*]

[*NEIL hands out large bundles of money to the waiters,*

then as he proceeds along the line, he comes suddenly to ALBERT.]

NEIL. Albert! [*The music stops.*] You got me into this! You've got to tell me how I'm going to get out of it!

ALBERT. What's the matter?

NEIL. I can't stand it! I can't live with Gladys any longer. What am I going to do about her?

ALBERT. Why, that's easy.

NEIL. What do you mean?

ALBERT. Just kill her—that's all.

NEIL. Kill her?

ALBERT. Of course. It's simple and practical.

NEIL. Do you know I never thought of that? I'm not very practical, am I?

ALBERT. No, you're not.

NEIL. Of course, I wouldn't like to do it unless it were absolutely necessary.

ALBERT. Still, it's worth thinking about. [*He leaves him with this thought.*]

NEIL. Yes, it is.

[*The music starts; GLADYS and the waiter dance on again.*]

GLADYS. We're going home now! Tip the waiters! Did you tip them all? We're going home! Mama and papa will be there, and Homer!

[*The waiters are now gone, and the curtains reopen on the CADY home of pillars. HOMER is working a radio set; MR. CADY is playing golf with an imaginary ball; MRS. CADY rocks, knits, and sings. All is pandemonium.*]

CADY. Fore! Everybody, fore!

HOMER. I've got the radio fixed! Listen!

RADIO. Stock market reports. Stock market reports!

[*Ad infinitum.*]

GLADYS. Oh, Neil! Isn't it nice to be in our own home again? [*She leaps into his lap.*]

MRS. CADY [*singing*]. "Bringing in the sheaves! Bringing in the sheaves!"

CADY. Give me the niblick! Give me the niblick!

NEIL. I wish you'd all keep still.

GLADYS. What, darling? Wait! Wait!

[*Everyone subsides.*]

I hear them! The dancing teachers! The dancing teachers! Now you'll learn to dance.

NEIL. I won't, I tell you!

GLADYS. Oh, yes, you will! Here they are! The dancing teachers! Come in, dancing teachers! Now you'll learn to dance!

[*Six dancing teachers enter—exquisite gentlemen, one like another.*]

NEIL. Gladys, I won't!

GLADYS. You've got to! Look! Aren't they wonderful? Here he is—my husband. You're to teach him to dance!

LEADER OF THE DANCING TEACHERS. Ah! [*He circles around NEIL, about to pounce.*]

NEIL. GLADYS, I warn you! If you go ahead with this, you'll be sorry!

GLADYS. Teach him to dance! Teach him to dance!

LEADER [*advancing upon NEIL*]. You've got to dance! We teach the world to dance! We make it dance. [*He seizes him.*] We've got him.

GLADYS. Now you'll learn to dance!

LEADER. Now watch me. One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in!

GLADYS. He's learning to dance! He's learning to dance!

ALL THE DANCING TEACHERS [*forcing NEIL's arms, shoulders, and feet*]. One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in! Now your shoulder, now your elbow! Now your shoulder, now your elbow! One foot out and one foot in! One foot out and one foot in. Now your shoulder—

NEIL [*tears himself loose*]. No! No! I tell you! Get out! All of you!

[*They fall back.*]

Get out, every one of you! I won't learn to dance!

[*They have disappeared.*]

GLADYS. Neil!

NEIL. [*The CADYS meantime unconcernedly continue their customary occupations, but in subdued tones.*] Thank God! Now I'm going to write!

GLADYS. Neil, do you realize how you're behaving?

NEIL. I do! I won't go on with this any longer! If this is to be our life together then I can't stand it! I won't! That's all—I won't!

GLADYS. Neil! After all I've done for you! After all papa's done for you!

NEIL. Done for me? You've ruined me, that's all! You've given me a lot of money that I didn't want, and you won't let me do the one thing I want to do! Well, now I'm going to write my music! I'm going to finish my symphony!

GLADYS. Oh, no, you're not! [*Crosses quickly to the piano and tears up the manuscript.*] There's your old symphony! Now, what have you got to say?

NEIL. You tore it up! It was the only reason I married you, and you tore it up! All right—there's only one thing to do! [*He takes up the paper knife from the piano—it is about twice the size that it was when the audience last saw it.*]

GLADYS. Neil, Neil! What are you going to do?

NEIL. I'm going to kill you!

[*She stands looking at him, transfixed. He stabs her, and she falls dead.*]

MRS. CADY [*quietly*]. Now you've done it!

NEIL. It was her fault! She killed my work!

MRS. CADY. She was a sweet girl. The police will get you.

[*She sings "Bringing in the Sheaves."*]

NEIL. Stop that singing!

MRS. CADY. I won't!

NEIL. And stop that damned knitting!

MRS. CADY. I won't! "Rock of Ages cleft for me."

[*NEIL stabs her. She dies, falling over backward, chair and all.*]

CADY [*blandly continuing his golf game*]. This is outrageous! The idea of killing a man's daughter and wife! I'm ashamed of you!

NEIL. You're to blame, too! Just as much as the others! Look!

CADY. What is it?

NEIL. You're dead, too.

CADY. Oh! [MR. CADY *dies*.]

NEIL. Thank God, they're out of the way! Peace! I can work at last!

THE RADIO. Stock market reports! Stock market reports!

HOMER [*coming from behind the radio machine*]. Is that so? I guess you forgot all about *me*, didn't you?

NEIL. Forget you? Indeed I didn't! Homer, my boy! [*He stabs him; HOMER crumples upon the floor.*] I guess that ends that! Free! Free!

HOMER [*sitting up*]. Free nothing! We'll sue you for this, you dirty dog! [*He falls dead again.*]

NEIL. It won't do you any good! Not when they know why I did it! Not when I show them what you killed! Not when I play them my music!

[*Half a dozen newspaper reporters enter. They are dressed alike and look alike; each has a pencil expectantly poised over a piece of paper.*]

THE REPORTERS [*speaking one at a time, as they surround NEIL*]. The Times! The World! The Post! The Globe! The Sun! The News! The Times! The World! The Post! The Globe! The Sun! The News!

NEIL [*indulging in a gesture with the paper knife*]. Gentlemen, this is purely a family affair. I don't think I should say anything at this time, but do come to my trial.

THE REPORTERS [*again speaking one at a time*]. A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement! A statement!

NEIL. Well, gentlemen, it's a long story.

[*Instantly a dozen newsboys rush down the aisles of the theatre, crying "Extra! Extra! All about the murders!" The din is terrific. Simultaneously the theatre lights up; the audience turns for a second to look at the newsboys, and in that second the curtain falls.*]

The newsboys pass out copies of The Morning-Evening, containing a full account of the quadruple murder.]

PART II

[The scene is now a courtroom. Against curtains of black stand three major objects of red—the same red that appeared fitfully in NEIL'S chintz curtains, and again as draperies for the pillars in the CADY home. Squarely in the centre is a block of twelve seats mounted on a platform. They are designed, obviously, for the jury, but instead of being the customary jurors' chairs they are of the kind found in theatres. NEIL'S piano and easy chair, of course, remain in their accustomed places. At the right, also vividly red, is the judge's bench, and against it leans a frame of photographs, of the sort that you see in theatre lobbies. The pictures show MR. CADY in various costumes and poses. The witness's box is at the left, and beside it a ticket taker's box, presided over by the ubiquitous JERRY. Near him is a hat-check boy recognizable as the same youth who took NEIL'S robe in the restaurant, and who also sold chocolates during the wedding ceremony. A couple of ushers, girls, stand chatting beside the jury box. NEIL, of course, is also present, walking up and down somewhat nervously, and consulting his watch. The jurors are beginning to arrive as the curtain ascends—three or four are streaming in. To NEIL'S surprise they all turn out to be dancing teachers.]

TICKET TAKER *[as the curtain ascends]*. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! *[He takes the tickets of the jurors, returns the stubs, and drops the remainder into his box.]*

CHECK BOY. Check your coat! Check your coat!

1ST JUROR. I guess we're early.

NEIL. Excuse me, but are you some of the jurors?

2ND JUROR. We certainly are.

NEIL. But—but you're dancing teachers, aren't you?

1ST JUROR. Best in the world.

NEIL. Are you going to try me? My music?

1ST JUROR. That's what.

NEIL. But it doesn't seem fair. I'm afraid you'll be prejudiced against something really good.

[*The SECOND and THIRD JURORS meet and automatically shake hands.*]

2ND JUROR. Hello, Ed!

3RD JUROR. Hello, Ed!

2ND JUROR. Well, you old son-of-a-gun!

3RD JUROR. Well, you old son-of-a-gun!

2ND JUROR. Glad to see you!

3RD JUROR. Glad to see you. [*They put their hands in their pockets simultaneously.*]

2ND JUROR. Fine! How's every little thing?

3RD JUROR. Fine! How's every little thing?

2ND JUROR. Well, glad I saw you!

3RD JUROR. Well, glad I saw you!

2ND JUROR. Goodbye, Ed!

3RD JUROR. Goodbye, Ed!

1ST JUROR [*at the frame of photographs*]. Say, who's this?

NEIL. That's the judge. It's the opening night of my trial, you know. That's the way he appeared in several famous cases.

2ND JUROR. [*Joining them and pointing to a picture*]. Oh, yes! That's the way he looked in the Watkins trial. He was terrible good. Did you see it?

[*A fourth juror is shown to a first row seat by an usher.*]

1ST JUROR. No, I was out of town. [*Points to another picture.*] There he is in the Ferguson case! Gosh, he was good in that!

NEIL. Yes, I heard he was.

2ND JUROR. Was he funny?

1ST JUROR. Funny? He had that courtroom roaring half the time.

2ND JUROR. I don't know another judge in the country who can deliver a charge to a jury like he can. Pathos, comedy, everything.

1ST JUROR. They say this will be the best trial he's ever done. I hear they were sold out last Monday.

[*More jurors are entering.*]

TICKET TAKER. Tickets, please!

HAT-CHECK BOY. Coats checked! Check your coat!

[*The THIRD JUROR presents his ticket stub to an usher.*]

USHER. Other aisle, please! [*He crosses to the other side of the jury box and presents the stub to the other usher.*]

USHER. Other aisle, please! [*He returns to the FIRST USHER.*]

USHER. Right this way! [*She indicates a seat in the middle of the box.*]

3RD JUROR [*looking at the stub*]. Ain't this an aisle seat?

1ST USHER. No, sir. Fourth seat in.

3RD JUROR. After paying all that money to a speculator! [*He takes his seat in the middle of the back row.*]

4TH JUROR. There ought to be a law against them. [*Other jurors are being seated.*]

[*NEIL, at the footlights, catches the attention of the orchestra leader.*]

Now, the overture to the trial, please.

[*The orchestra plays the overture—a few bars of cheap musical comedy strains, the modulation from one tune to another being most elaborate. As the orchestra plays, more jurors are seated, leaving empty only the seat next the Judge's bench for the foreman, and another in the middle of the first row. The jurors look at their programs, talk, adjust opera glasses, etc. As the overture ends, ALBERT enters, a camera slung over his shoulder.*]

NEIL. Why, hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil!

NEIL. What are you doing here?

ALBERT. I'm covering the trial.

NEIL. "Covering" it? For a newspaper?

ALBERT [*nods*]. I'm a reporter on the Illustrated.

NEIL. Oh, yes! You used to write, didn't you?

ALBERT. I understand they're going to try some of your music?

NEIL. Yes. You'll give it a fair criticism, won't you—in the paper?

ALBERT. In what paper?

NEIL. Why, your paper.

ALBERT. The Illustrated? We don't use any writing. It's an *illustrated* paper. Didn't you ever see it—in the subway?

NEIL. Of course! I remember—just pictures. But how do people know what they are?

ALBERT. Oh, we always have a few simple words, saying what the picture is about. A good many of our subscribers can read, and they tell the others.

[A CANDY SELLER appears. *He has the usual tray of chocolates and peppermints seen in the theatres.*]

CANDY SELLER. Chocolates and bon-bons! Fresh chocolates and bon-bons! Assorted chocolates!

1ST JUROR [*leaning out of the jury box*]. Here you are. [*Buys a box of candy.*]

[*The CANDY SELLER goes out again. There is a sudden burst of activity in the jury box.*]

NEIL. What's all that?

ALBERT. They are getting ready to elect a foreman for the jury.

[*There is something like a cheer from the jury box. At one end a sign appears reading: JONES FOR FOREMAN. At the other side: SMITH FOR FOREMAN. The FIRST JUROR rises to speak. He receives hearty applause.*]

1ST JUROR. Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I don't think anybody here has to be told at this late date that Harry J. Smith, retired, is the logical man for foreman of this grand jury. I guess everybody here knows Mr. Smith's record. You have all known him since childhood. He is an old Eighth Ward boy and will give a jury a business administration.

OTHER JURORS. Hooray!

[*The FIRST JUROR sits. The SECOND JUROR immediately demands attention.*]

2ND JUROR. Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I don't think anybody here has to be told at this late date that Thomas A. Jones, retired, is the

logical man for foreman of this grand jury. I guess everybody here knows Mr. Jones's record. You have all known him since childhood. He is an old Eighth Ward boy and will give the jury a business administration.

VOICE. What about Ireland?

[There are cries of "Throw him out!"]

[NEIL holds up a hand for silence.]

NEIL. Wait! *[He goes into the witness box.]* Ladies and gentlemen of the Fifth Jury District: I know it is late to be putting forward a new candidate for foreman of this grand jury, but this is my trial, and it is my music that you're going to hear. Both of the candidates who are now up before you are good dancers, but it is only fair that there should be someone on the jury who knows good music.

JURORS. Hooray!

NEIL. Therefore, when the light on the Times Building swings on tonight, I want it to be a steady red light, which will show that we have elected the Hon. Albert Rice, of Chicago, a man of the people, for the people, and by the people, and the stars and stripes forever in the good old U. S. A.!

JURORS. Hooray!

[Almost immediately a red light shines across the group, and the orchestra strikes up Sousa's march, "Stars and Stripes." The jurors, cheering, march around the jury box, carrying American flags, banners, noise-makers, etc. There are cries of "Rice Wins! Hoorah for Rice!" Albert, still mindful of the fact that he has been sent to get the news, makes ready his camera and calls on the crowd to halt.]

ALBERT. Hold it, please!

[They stop—there is a scurrying to get into the photograph. ALBERT snaps them.]

NEIL. Hold it! *[He takes the camera, and ALBERT automatically prepares to have his own picture taken. One of the ushers tries to slip into the picture, but NEIL waves her aside. He snaps ALBERT.]* Will they be out soon?

ALBERT. Soon? They are out! *[He pulls a copy of the Illustrated from his pocket—a newspaper covered with a*

front page crowded with photographs, but entirely blank elsewhere.] I brought one with me.

NEIL. They're on the front page.

ALBERT. Sure! We put everything on the front page. [*He points.*] There's a picture of the judge delivering his charge.

NEIL. But he hasn't delivered it yet.

ALBERT. Well, we have to get things quick. Our readers expect it. [*ALBERT takes his place in the jury box. The other jurors lean over and shake his hand.*]

NEIL. The Hon. Albert Rice assumes office as thousands cheer. [*He waits for the cheer—it does not come. He motions to the jury. They clap their hands perfunctorily.*]

ALBERT. Thank you, gentlemen.

TICKET TAKER [*announcing*]. His Honor, the Judge!

[*Everyone rises. The orchestra begins the Soldiers' Chorus from "Faust." The Judge enters. He is MR. CADY, his golf suit handsomely covered by an enormous red robe. He also wears an enormous Judge's wig. He throws away all dignity, however, by lifting the skirts of his gown and skipping into view. The music ends on a long note in the brasses, such as attends the finish of an acrobat's trick. CADY curtsies toward the jury box in response to unanimous applause, and blows a kiss. He goes up to his chair and holds the picture of a satisfied actor as he waits for another burst of applause to subside.*]

CADY [*at last—to NEIL*]. Got a match?

NEIL. What?

CADY. Got a match?

NEIL. Oh, yes! [*He strikes a match. Although several feet away from the cigar, the cigar lights. MR. CADY and jury are about to sit when NEIL hisses.*] Look out!

CADY. What is it?

NEIL. That chair. It isn't very strong, you know.

CADY. Oh, I'll be careful. [*He sits. The jurors sit.*]

TICKET TAKER. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!

[*The final juror enters and presents his ticket.*]

CADY. Ladies and gentlemen, I——

NEIL [*noticing the tardy juror*]. Just a minute! He's late. [*To the juror.*] Can't you people ever be on time?

[*The tardy juror gives his seat check to an usher, who starts to lead him to his place, in the middle of the second row, but finds somebody already in it.*]

CADY [*blandly*]. Ladies and gentlemen, I declare the Court—[*The confusion makes him break off again.*]

USHER [*leaning far over*]. May I see your check, please?

CADY. I declare the Court——

USHER. May I see your check?

JUROR [*searching his pockets*]. I had it here some place. Ah! [*Gives stub to the usher.*]

[*The usher examines the ticket stub.*]

USHER. Oh, you belong in the row ahead. This gentleman has a ticket for this seat.

[*People in both rows have to stand up while the exchange is made. It is a good deal of trouble, to put it mildly.*]

NEIL [*to CADY*]. All right now. I'm sorry.

CADY. I declare the court to be in session. [*There is a round of applause. CADY bows.*]

The business of the day is the trial of Neil Wadsworth McRae for murder.

[*There is more applause. NEIL is finally compelled to bow. CADY again addresses NEIL confidentially.*]

Am I right?

NEIL. Yes. And don't forget, I'm going to play my symphony. That was the reason I did it, you know.

CADY. Yes, I remember. [*He is quite conversational.*] Now, the first thing to be done, I should say, is to have the prosecuting attorney make a sort of general charge. [*To NEIL.*] What do you think?

NEIL. I guess that's right. How about it, Albert?

ALBERT [*looking up from his program*]. Yes, that's right. [*NEIL nods to the TICKET TAKER.*]

TICKET TAKER [*announcing*]. The prosecuting attorney!

[*HOMER enters to the tune of "Tammany." He wears*

a long black robe. He receives a hearty round of applause, with a few hisses.]

NEIL. Oh, it's you!

HOMER [*quietly*]. I'll get you now, you dirty dog!

NEIL. I think not.

CADY. Come, come, we can't be all day at this. I've got to get back to the office. Now, just what were these murders all about?

HOMER. [*Reads from document. As HOMER begins to read Usher and Check Boy begin a whispered conversation that soon dominates the scene.*]

SIMULTANEOUSLY

HOMER. "On such and such a blank date, the defendant, Neil Wadsworth McRae, did brutally murder, maim, assault, destroy, stab, injure, kill, and cause the death of Gladys Virginia Cady, his wife; Mr. Cady, her father; Mrs. Cady, her mother; and Homer Cady, her brother; destroying one and all of the aforesaid Gladys Virginia Cady, his wife; Mr. Cady, her father; Mrs. Cady, her mother, and Homer Cady, her brother—by the use of a large paper knife, of bone manufacture and curious design, a picture of which appeared in the newspapers at the time."

[*Hands the newspaper containing the picture to CADY.*]

USHER. Did you sell much candy?

CHECK BOY. Sure—enough to buy a couple seats for the movies.

USHER. Oh, let's see the one up the street!

CHECK BOY. Oh, that's punk! You always want to see the sad ones.

USHER. I hate comedies.

CHECK BOY. Well, I hate sad ones.

NEIL. Quiet, please; some of us would like to hear the show!

[*They grudgingly leave the room.*]

CADY. Yes, I saw it. A great, big, long one. Exhibit A. [*He hands it to the foreman.*]

ALBERT. Exhibit A! [*Passes it to the other jurors.*]

[*The other jurors repeat "Exhibit A," passing the newspaper from one to another.*]

HOMER. Having caused the death of the aforesaid and aforementioned people, I therefore call upon the Court to punish said Neil Wadsworth MacRae in one of two ways prescribed by law—death or hard labor for life, whichever they do in this state.

CADY [*realizing that maybe it's serious after all*]. Oh, no! Is that so?

NEIL [*lightly*]. Just wait!

CADY [*to HOMER*]. Yes. Just wait, please.

1ST JUROR. [*Leans toward his neighbor, with open program, and reads from it, as though confiding a bit of real news.*] Say, this courtroom, with every seat occupied, can be emptied in less than three minutes.

CADY. Silence in the court! [*A pause.*]

HOMER. The State rests. [*He sits in the easy chair and is immediately seized with a fit of coughing.* MRS. CADY instantly appears behind HOMER; she has her knitting, but no chair.]

MRS. CADY. Are you all right, Homer?

HOMER. I guess so.

MRS. CADY [*to the jury*]. Homer's sick. He was always delicate. But he was a good boy though. When Homer wanted to be he was as good a boy as you'd find in a month of Sundays. There was no reason on earth why Neil shouldn't have allowed him to live, just like a lot of other people are allowed to live. [*The jurors applaud her.*]

CADY. You are his mother?

MRS. CADY. Yes, sir. [*CADY shakes her hand, sympathetically.*]

CADY. You were also a victim, I believe?

MRS. CADY. That's right. [*CADY shakes her hand again.*] You heard how he did it? With a paper knife.

CADY. Oh, yes! You see, we're trying him today.

MRS. CADY. For the murders?

CADY. Yes.

MRS. CADY. Oh, I beg your pardon! [*Begins to back away in confusion.*] I wouldn't have intruded, if I'd known.

NEIL. Wait a minute! I'd like to have Mrs. Cady take the stand, please.

MRS. CADY [*flustered*]. Who? Me?

NEIL. If you don't mind.

HOMER. What! Going to make her take the stand? A mother? [*There are kisses from the jury.*]

NEIL. Over here, please! [*Leads her to the witness box.*] Do you swear to tell the truth—the truth—and—the truth?

MRS. CADY. Yes.

NEIL. You can't tell the truth unless you raise your hand, you know.

MRS. CADY. No?

NEIL. No. [*She puts up her hand.*] You're Mrs. Cady, aren't you?

MRS. CADY. Yes. [*To MR. CADY.*] Is that right, Fred?

CADY. Yes—that's all right.

NEIL [*suddenly wheeling on MRS. CADY*]. Now then. [*MRS. CADY jumps.*] Where were you on Friday, June third?

MRS. CADY. Knitting. [*She suits the action to the word.*]

NEIL. But you used to sing in the choir, didn't you?

MRS. CADY. Oh, yes. [*Sings.*] "Just as I am, without one plea." [*The jurors stand and join in. CADY stops smoking for a moment and also sings a bar or two.*]

CADY [*suddenly rapping for order*]. Silence in the court!

NEIL [*waves a warning finger at MRS. CADY, as though to intimate that another question is about to come*]. Prove an alibi!

HOMER. I object, Your Honor!

CADY. Objection sustained and overruled! [*To MRS. CADY.*] Answer the question! [*NEIL smiles mockingly at HOMER.*]

MRS. CADY. What was it?

NEIL. Prove an alibi!

MRS. CADY. What kind?

NEIL [*to CADY*]. I didn't know there were different kinds.

CADY. Oh, yes—there are several kinds of alibis.

NEIL. Then prove any kind.

HOMER. Your Honor, I object!

CADY. You object?

HOMER. Yes! [*He goes to NEIL and looks sinisterly at him.*] I object to his looks!

NEIL. Why, what's the matter with them?

CADY. [*It is apparently a point of great import.*] An objection has been raised to the prisoner's looks. [*Looks at NEIL carefully.*] Hm! Have you anything to say?

NEIL. Sir?

CADY [*quite casual*]. Have you anything to say about your looks?

NEIL. Why—I think they're all right. [*There is a weighty pause.*]

CADY. This is a serious question. [*He removes his wig. The jury breaks out in chatter; CADY raps.*] Order, please! Now, the prisoner thinks that his looks are all right.

HOMER. But he can't prove it!

CADY [*to NEIL*]. Can you prove it?

NEIL. Why— [*Here's an awful situation!*]

CADY. You see, this is a court of law. Everything has to be proved.

NEIL. Well, well—can't the jury tell by looking?

[*NEIL looks toward the jury, which peers at him closely, but is puzzled. The jurors shake their heads, uncertain.*]

CADY. You see, it's illegal for a jury to know anything until it's been instructed. Now, as I understand it, the point is that you think your looks are all right?

NEIL. Yes.

CADY. But you can't prove it?

NEIL. [*If he can only have a moment's peace in which to think it over!*]

Oh, Lord! [*One of the jurors is noisily unwrapping a candy*

box.] Quiet! Good heavens—how can I think if they're going to—Your Honor, they *must* be quiet!

CADY. Quiet!

THE JUROR. But it's candy! [*It is a big box full and it is passed up to the Judge.*]

CADY. Oh, really? [*GLADYS enters in a brilliant dinner gown and an ornate cloak.*]

GLADYS. Oh, candy! [*She crosses to the Judge's stand and begins rifling the box.*] Hello, Neil! I didn't mean to interrupt! I just ran in to get the boys! We're going dancing! [*Some of the jurors rise; one or two even begin climbing over the railing to join her.*] There's a big new place opening tonight and they're going to take me there! Got some money, papa?

CADY. Ten thousand enough? [*He gives her a handful of bills.*]

GLADYS. Oh, thanks. Come on, boys! [*The jurors make further gestures toward going.*]

NEIL. No, wait! [*All movement is suspended.*] You mean you want to take—*them*—away with you?

GLADYS. Of course!

NEIL. But—but I'm being tried for the murders. And if you take the jury away——

GLADYS. I'm sorry, Neil, but I couldn't miss the opening, could I? Are you ready? [*The jurors step toward her.*]

NEIL. No, no! [*Again the jurors halt. NEIL appeals to CADY.*] She can't do that, can she?

CADY [*who has been eating so much candy he has had little time for the trial's new aspect*]. What?

NEIL. Take the jury away, right in the middle of things?

CADY [*licking his fingers*]. She can if it's habeas corpus.

NEIL [*not at all sure*]. Well—is it?

CADY [*he licks his fingers*]. It's beginning to look that way.

NEIL. But it isn't fair! They've got to hear my music. I know what I'll do! [*He faces CADY.*] I'll take it to a higher court!

CADY [*just a bit hurt*]. Oh, don't you like this court?

NEIL. It isn't that. It's a good court, I guess, and the people are lovely, but——

CADY. About how high a one would you want?

NEIL. I'd want the highest I could get.

CADY. All right. [JUDGE CADY *slowly goes up in the air, as his stand grows two or three feet higher.*] Is this high enough for you?

NEIL. I guess so. Is this the superior court?

CADY. Oh, yes. Much superior. And more up-to-date. We send out all our verdicts by radio.

NEIL. She can't take them away with her, can she—in this court?

CADY. Oh, no! You see, in a higher court the lower court is reversed.

NEIL. Good! [*The jurors resume their old positions.*]

GLADYS. Oh, the devil! Well, then I'll take Albert. He's only the foreman. [*She grabs ALBERT by the hand and leads him out of the courtroom.*]

CADY [*sucks a sticky thumb*]. Well, are the rest of you ready to bring in a verdict? All in favor will say——

NEIL. No, wait! I'm not through—you haven't heard the music yet.

CADY. Oh, that's right! You're going to play for us.

NEIL. Of course. That's why I killed them, you know—on account of the music. I want to prove that I was justified. Listen! [*He goes to the piano.*] You won't blame me when you've heard the music. [*He strikes a chord.*] This is a symphony in C Minor. [*He starts to play. The result is disconnected, meaningless. There is a budding hissing from the jurors.* NEIL, *with a cry, jumps to his feet, holding up the torn sheet of music. He finds it almost impossible to speak.*] She destroyed it! She tore it up, and now I can't play it! Cynthia! Cynthia!

[CYNTHIA *appears at the piano. She is calm and sympathetic, as always.*]

CYNTHIA. Yes, dear?

NEIL. Cynthia, she tore up the symphony! I can't remember it, and they're waiting for me to play!

CYNTHIA. You still have the pantomime, haven't you?

NEIL. Yes.

CYNTHIA. Then play that for them instead. [*She finds the pantomime music.*] They'll think it's better, anyhow. [*Puts the music before him.*]

NEIL. But it isn't finished.

CYNTHIA. Well, now you *can* finish it.

NEIL. Can I?

CYNTHIA. Of course. It'll be all right, dear—you'll see.

NEIL. You—you think we ought to do it?

CYNTHIA. Of course.

NEIL. All right. [*He faces his inquisitors.*] Ladies and gentlemen, instead of the symphony, we're going to play a little pantomime, called "A Kiss in Xanadu"—written by Cynthia Mason and Neil McRae. We'll need quite a lot of room, so if you don't mind clearing the court— [*The Judge's dais and the witness box disappear. The jury box, too, moves into blackness.*] The scene is the royal palace in Xanadu. It's a night in June—one of those spring nights that you find only in Xanadu. Now, if you're all ready—music! [*The music of the pantomime begins.*] Cynthia, we ought to have a window to show what kind of night it is.

[*In the distance a great open window appears. Beyond a moonlit balustrade are flowers and trees and stars.*]

CYNTHIA. It's coming!

NEIL. Thanks! The scene is the bedchamber of the Prince and Princess. On the right is the bed of the Princess and on the left is the bed of the Prince.

[*Two fairy-tale beds appear from the darkness. They are canopied in pink. Above them are flower-draped testers that rise to golden points. NEIL and CYNTHIA seat themselves at the piano and the pantomime begins.*]

A LORD OF THE BEDCHAMBER and a LADY OF THE BEDCHAMBER enter and bow to each other ostentatiously. They are followed into the room by two small black pages, carrying tiny bed tables. The one for the Princess's bed bears a small lamp with a dainty shade. The Prince's has a candle

and shade, and a small phonograph. As the LORD and LADY examine the room the pages go out and return with a pillow, which is placed at the foot of the Princess's bed, and a costumer, which is for the convenience of the Prince. The attendants convince themselves there are no intruders under the beds and depart. A clock strikes nine.

The PRINCESS enters. She is very beautiful, but very bored. The lovely night lures her to the window. She goes out on the little balcony and sighs. She is a married Princess. She returns to the bedchamber and snappishly commands the LADY to undress her. Nothing to do but go to bed! The LADY draws the curtains and leaves.

The PRINCE enters with his LORD. He would like to be a Gay Dog Prince and he twirls his mustache bravely. He too, would like to find romance again, but here he is—a married Prince! A page puts his royal dressing gown and crown on the costumer. The LORD attaches curlers to the royal mustache and leaves the PRINCE. The PRINCE turns on the phonograph and tries to do his Nightly Dozen. But the night outside distracts him. He goes to the window. It is too much for him. A second attempt to exercise is abandoned. He will go out to Adventure. If he turns the royal dressing gown inside out, it should make a rather good disguise. He does so. The lining of the crown makes a serviceable cap. He tiptoes to the other bed. The PRINCESS is asleep. He draws the canopy across his own bed and steals out the window.

CYNTHIA. But the Princess wants to go adventuring, too. I know! Let's have the moon wake her!

NEIL. Yes! Come on, moon! [The moon obligingly sends its beams across the bed of the Princess.] Thank you!

The pantomine proceeds. The PRINCESS's head pops through the draperies. It is such a beautiful night! She observes the closed canopy of her lord's bed. He is asleep—the dull, conventional husband. She goes to the window. What a night! Romance lies out there. She hesitates. She decides. Frightened, but determined, she takes a cover from her bed. An excellent shawl it makes! But something is

wrong. *She stands undecided, her hands touching her lovely hair. The music stops.*

NEIL. We skipped a place here. We've got to disguise the Princess. She mustn't be recognized, either, you know.

CYNTHIA. Of course not. I have it! Let her put on her lamp-shade for a bonnet!

NEIL. And she can use the Prince's candle-shade for a mask!

The music starts again and the PRINCESS dons the lamp-shade and puts two finger holes through the candle-shade. She is very happy and goes out to the trees and stars. There is darkness—and here we are in a public park in Xanadu. There are a good many flowery bushes to be seen, but they are not noticed by the PRINCE, who sits, depressed, on a park bench, under a street lamp. A POLICEMAN, a LAMP-LIGHTER, and two small attendants enter on patrol, and sedately go about their business. The PRINCESS comes into the park. A man, a romantic-looking man, even if he is masked by that upturned coat collar! A girl, a charming girl, even if she is holding a small mask before her eyes! She skips away, but returns. She drops her handkerchief. She quietly and politely sneezes. He springs to her aid with her handkerchief. She sits beside him on the bench. He plucks a rose from the bush behind them and offers it timidly. She tosses it away. The light in the lamp is much too bright. A mighty puff from the PRINCE and it goes out. But the WATCH returns. The lamp is relighted. The PRINCE and the PRINCESS sit a little closer. He offers another rose. This time she accepts it. But that lamp! He has a permanent solution. He breaks the lamp in two. Masks are not needed in the darkness, but the moon comes up. He waves it away. She kisses him. A clock strikes five. The sun rises. The adventure is over. She runs away. He calls, but she does not answer. He picks up the rose she spurned. His grief is covered by considerate darkness.

Once more it is the Royal bedchamber. The PRINCESS creeps into the room and into bed. The PRINCE steals in

a moment later. He goes to the PRINCESS's bed. Still asleep! He goes to his bed. The clock strikes eight. The LORD and LADY arrive. The pages fetch a breakfast table. The royal pair are awakened. They sit down to eat. She starts to pour her husband's coffee. Oh, yes, she had forgotten! She rises and offers a cheek to be kissed. He mechanically obliges. They sit down again. But they cannot eat. The music of the night is still with them. They steal wistful looks at the window. The PRINCESS looks at the rose He gave her. The PRINCE looks at the one She first refused. The flowers are stealthily put away. The PRINCE and the PRINCESS unfold their napkins. It is the humdrum life once more.

[The curtain falls, slowly. Then, slowly, the footlights go down, plunging the auditorium into complete darkness. Immediately we hear the verdict from the vastly Superior Court—sent out, as JUDGE CADY had said, by radio. It comes, through magnifiers, from the rear of the auditorium, and takes the form of loud and derisive laughter, punctuated by cries of "Rotten!" "No good!" "Highbrow!" "Terrible!" In the darkness the curtain again rises. Seated cross-legged on NEIL's piano, still in the red wig and with a red light playing on him, is JUDGE CADY. As always, he is smoking a cigar. NEIL sits facing him on the piano stool.]

CADY [to the invisible voices]. Silence! [The voices stop.] Now, was that what you wanted to show us?

NEIL. Yes, sir.

CADY. Well, of course we don't want to hurt your feelings, Neil, but I'm afraid it's a little bit highbrow. Don't you think so?

NEIL. No, sir. Not very.

CADY. Well, I don't think it's what they want. [To the unseen jurors.] How about it?

[A single voice comes over the radio. It says "Rotten!"]

CADY. Are you ready to bring in a verdict?

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Yes, I move we bring in a verdict!

SECOND JUROR'S VOICE. I second the motion!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. It is moved and seconded that we bring in a verdict. Remarks? [*A pause.*] All those in favor say "Aye."

CHORUS OF VOICES. Aye!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Opposed—"No?" [*Pause.*] The motion is carried.

CADY. Well, what sort of a verdict do you want to bring in? There are several kinds of verdicts.

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. I move we bring in a verdict of guilty!

SECOND JUROR'S VOICE. I second that motion!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. It is moved and seconded that we bring in a verdict of guilty. Remarks? All those in favor say "Aye."

CHORUS OF VOICES. Aye!

FIRST JUROR'S VOICE. Opposed—"No?" [*Pause.*] Well, I guess the motion's carried.

CADY. See, Neil? I told you so.

NEIL. Well—well, what are you going to do with me?

CADY. This thing of using the imagination has got to stop. We're going to make you work in the right way. You see, your talents belong to us now, and we're going to use every bit of them. We're going to make you the most wonderful song writer that ever lived.

NEIL. But I can't write that kind of music! You know I can't!

CADY. You can do it by our system. You are sentenced to be at the Cady Consolidated Art Factory at eight o'clock tomorrow morning!

NEIL. Art factory?

CADY. At eight o'clock tomorrow morning!

[*The lights slowly dim and fade out, and instantly there is a burst of noise. Pianos are playing discordantly; there is the sound of machinery in the distance, a voice is singing a jazz tune, and other voices are heard in loud declamation. The lights go up again on a tier of four cells. In the first a man is dictating to*

a stenographer; in the second NEIL is working away at a piano, while a youth in a belted coat and a straw hat, atilt on his head, sings to the accompaniment of NEIL's music; in the third cell an artist works before an easel, and in the fourth a young man is loudly reciting poetry, apparently moved to do so by the posturings of two other youths who are in the cell with him. After a moment of this pandemonium a guide enters, followed by three visitors. All four are dancing teachers, so far as outward appearances go, but they are marked apart by the fact that the guide wears an official-looking cap, and the visitors carry umbrellas and open Baedekers. The guide raises his voice for silence; a gong sounds somewhere, and all activity ceases. The figures in the cages come down to the bars and stand waiting.]

GUIDE. Now this, gentlemen, is the manufacturing department. In this studio—[*he indicates the first*]*—*we have Walter Carp Smith, the world's greatest novelist——

NOVELIST [*more or less routine*]. How are you?

GUIDE [*passing to the second cage*]. In this studio, Neil McRae, the world's greatest composer!

NEIL [*listlessly*]. How are you?

GUIDE [*at the third cage*]. In this one, Finley Jamison, the world's greatest magazine artist!

ARTIST. How are you?

GUIDE [*at the fourth cage*]. And in this, James Lee Wrex, the world's greatest poet!

POET. How are you?

GUIDE [*indicating the unseen cages beyond*]. The studios beyond are devoted to science and religion. Mr. Cady was the first person in the world to put religion up in ten-cent packages, selling direct to the consumer.

FIRST VISITOR. You don't say so!

GUIDE. He also prides himself on having the largest output of literature and music in the world. He's going to open two more plants the first of the month. Now, would you like to see how these men work?

FIRST VISITOR. Yes, indeed! [*Goes toward the first cage.*] Did you say this was the novelist?

GUIDE. The world's greatest. Author of more than two thousand published works.

FIRST VISITOR. What an imagination!

GUIDE. Yes, sir, none at all. Now if you're ready, I'll show you how he works. Go!

NOVELIST. [*Begins at once to dictate from a book in his hand.*] "Something closely resembling a tear fell from the old patrician's cheek. 'Margaret,' he cried, 'the people of the West have learned to love you, too.' 'Jackie boy,' she whispered. 'They have made you governor after all.' Far off on the—the—" [*He hesitates; the stenographer takes up the story.*]

STENOGRAPHER. "—desert, the caravan faded away. Night took them in its arms and a great hush fell on the forest. The two lovers——"

GUIDE. Stop! [*He turns to the visitors.*] There you are!

FIRST VISITOR. Was *she* writing it?

GUIDE. Oh, no! Sometimes she gets a little ahead of him, that's all.

FIRST VISITOR. Isn't he wonderful!

GUIDE. Forty-five minutes after he finishes a novel we have it printed and assembled and on its way to the movie men.

FIRST VISITOR. May we talk to him?

GUIDE. Certainly.

FIRST VISITOR [*to the novelist*]. I've enjoyed your novels very much.

NOVELIST. Thank you.

FIRST VISITOR. I see you're writing a new one.

NOVELIST. Of course. I'm under contract.

FIRST VISITOR. What's that? [*Indicating the book in the novelist's hand.*]

NOVELIST. It's my last one.

FIRST VISITOR. But weren't you just dictating from it, for your new one?

NOVELIST. Yes. They like it that way.

GUIDE. Under the old system they wrote it all new each

time. Here—let the gentleman have it as a souvenir.

FIRST VISITOR [*reading the title*]. "Eternal Love." What's your new one called?

NOVELIST. "Love Eternal."

GUIDE. Don't forget—you're lecturing at three o'clock at Wanamaker's.

SECOND VISITOR. Say, will you show us how the artist works?

GUIDE. Certainly. What will you have—a cover or an advertisement?

SECOND VISITOR. What's the difference?

GUIDE. There isn't any.

SECOND VISITOR. Well, then, I'll take an advertisement.

GUIDE. All right. Go!

[*The Artist draws without looking at the canvas. He hands it to the guide, who hands it to the visitor. The canvas is blank.*]

There you are!

SECOND VISITOR. What beautiful eyes!

THIRD VISITOR. Wonderful!

GUIDE. Do you want to talk to him?

SECOND VISITOR. Oh, thanks. I suppose it'll be used on a magazine?

ARTIST. Oh, yes—thousands.

SECOND VISITOR. Must be worth five or six hundred dollars.

ARTIST [*bored to death*]. Thirty-five hundred.

FIRST VISITOR. You don't say so!

GUIDE. And here, gentlemen, is our poet. His "Jolly Jingles" are printed in three million newspapers a day.

FIRST VISITOR [*pointing to the men in back*]. Who are those men?

GUIDE. Those are his models. He is the only poet in the world who works from living models. That's why all his poetry is so true, so human. He'll show you. Go!

POET. I will now write a friendship poem. [*Motions to his models.*] Friendliness No. 3, please. "Friendship."

[*The models strike a pose, hands clasped.*]

[*The poet recites.*]

"Goodbye, old pal; hello, old pal; the greatest pal I ever knew. A dog's your finest friend, my lad, when all the world is blue."

SECOND VISITOR. Ain't it human?

GUIDE. And here, gentlemen, is Mr. Neil McRae, America's foremost composer.

FIRST VISITOR. Who's that in back?

GUIDE. That's his lyric writer. You will now see how they work. What kind of a song will it be, McRae?

NEIL. A pathetic. [*Sits at the piano.*]

GUIDE. A pathetic. Go! [*NEIL plays.*]

SINGER [*in a horrible voice*].

"You've broken my heart like you broke my heart,
So why should you break it again?"

[*NEIL comes to the bars again.*]

GUIDE. That will sell one and one-half million.

SECOND VISITOR. I suppose you write other kinds of songs, too?

NEIL. Oh, yes—mammies, sweeties, and fruit songs. The ideas are brought from the inspiration department every hour on the hour. After I turn them into music they are taken to the purifying department, and then to the testing and finishing rooms. They are then packed for shipment.

FIRST VISITOR. A wonderful system!

THIRD VISITOR. I should say so!

SECOND VISITOR. Do you work all the time?

NEIL. No, the night shift comes on at eight.

FIRST VISITOR. How long have you been here?

NEIL. For years and years.

SECOND VISITOR. Say, will you write another song for us—just as a souvenir?

NEIL [*desperately*]. Oh, why don't you all go away?

GUIDE. What's that? What was that? You get busy there and write another song!

NEIL. No! I've been writing forever—I'm tired of it.

GUIDE. Do you want me to call Mr. Cady?

NEIL. I don't care! I don't care what you do!

GUIDE. I'll give you one more chance.

NEIL. No! I won't!

GUIDE. All right then! Mr. Cady! Mr. Cady! [*The Guide rushes out. The visitors slink away. A gong sounds. Those in the cages huddle in fear. MR. CADY appears behind the cages. He carries a large snake whip.*]

CADY. What's the matter here?

GUIDE. McRae says he won't go on!

CADY. He won't, eh? Well, we'll see about that!

NEIL. I can't go on! I'm tired!

CADY. What's that got to do with it? You've got to go on!

NEIL. I can't, I tell you. I can't keep on at this sort of thing.

CADY. You know your sentence, don't you? You've got to work our way until you die.

NEIL. [*dully*]. Yes, I know.

CADY. We own you now. The family. The family owns you. [*He falls into rhythmic measure.*]

You take our money and you live our life,

We own you, we own you.

You take our money and you live our life,

We own you, we own you.

You take our money and you live our way,

We pay the piper and we tell him what to play.

You sold your soul and you can't get away,

We own you, we own you.

[*The CADY family and others enter at back, and weave back and forth joining in the chant, reaching through the bars at NEIL.*]

NEIL. Until I die! I can be free from you if I die! I can die! You can't keep me from it! That's how I can get away from you! Open the door! Open the door! [*He shakes the door on the audience's side of the cage. It opens.*] It was never locked! [*He steps out and closes the door. CYNTHIA enters.*] Cynthia, Cynthia, I'm free! I can die! [*Those in the background disappear.*] Cynthia, how are we going to do it?

CYNTHIA. We'll go to an executioner. I know a good one. You mustn't be afraid. It won't hurt. [*An Executioner appears masked, with a black robe and a huge paper knife.*] See—it's Jerry!

JERRY. Hello, Mr. McRae. [*Takes off his mask and cap.*]

NEIL. Oh, hello, Jerry! You're going to do it, are you?

JERRY. Sure. [*Feels the edge of his knife.*]

NEIL. Oh, that's good.

CYNTHIA. Do we have to wait long?

JERRY. No—you're next.

NEIL. Oughtn't we to have a block?

CYNTHIA [*moving the armchair*]. We'll use this. It'll be more comfortable.

NEIL. Oh! And you'll stay with me?

CYNTHIA. Always. [*She stands beside him.*] But it won't hurt. [*ALBERT enters, wearing a short medical apron and jacket.*] Albert will give you a pill.

NEIL. Oh, yes! Hello, Albert!

ALBERT. Hello, Neil! Got a glass of water?

CYNTHIA [*glass of water in hand*]. We're ready, Doctor. [*ALBERT goes to the chair; tests its strength.*]

ALBERT [*to the Executioner*]. Is the light all right? [*The cabaret orchestra is heard in the distance.*]

JERRY. I think so.

NEIL. There's that music again.

ALBERT. You're nervous, that's all. Here! [*NEIL swallows a pill.*]

CYNTHIA. Now it can't possibly hurt you.

ALBERT [*motions NEIL to the chair*]. Here we are! [*NEIL sits.*] That's it—way back. [*To JERRY.*] Right?

NEIL. Shall I take off my collar?

ALBERT. Oh, no. There's room, I think.

NEIL. Just a once-through, please.

ALBERT. Of course. It'll be all over in a minute.

NEIL. Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Yes.

NEIL. I was afraid you'd gone.

CYNTHIA. No, dear. [*JERRY taps his knife on floor.*] Are you ready, Neil?

NEIL. Yes, except for that music. Charles the First didn't have any music. [*The lights begin to fade.*]

CYNTHIA. He's ready, Doctor.

NEIL. Don't go away, Cynthia!

ALBERT. All ready. [JERRY taps the knife again on the floor.]

NEIL. Goodbye! I'll see you soon.

CYNTHIA. Are you comfortable?

NEIL. Yes. You'll be with me always, won't you, Cynthia? [There is darkness, save for a cloudy moving light on NEIL.]

CYNTHIA. Always.

ALBERT. All right.

NEIL. Cynthia, are you there?

CYNTHIA. Yes, darling.

[There is a hum of voices. Presently one can discern several chanting, "You take our money and you lead our life." MRS. CADY is heard saying, "Homer's sick." MR. CADY is apparently telephoning somewhere. He is shouting, "Well, I'll tell you what to do!" HOMER's voice repeats, "You dirty dog!" GLADYS shrilly calls out, "He's learning to dance!" The voices become a chant, finally unintelligible. The lights slowly go up again. We are back in NEIL's apartment. He is asleep in his chair. It is sunset. There is a knock, a real knock, on the door.]

NEIL [half asleep]. Yes? [CYNTHIA enters.]

CYNTHIA. Is anything the matter, Neil? I thought I heard you talking.

NEIL. It didn't hurt. Was it a success?

CYNTHIA. Neil, are you all right?

NEIL [takes her hand]. I need you, Cynthia!

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil, do you? Are you sure you do? I—I couldn't stay away, Neil. I tried to, but I couldn't. Because I need you, too. I just couldn't give you to anyone else on earth.

NEIL. Cynthia, dear.

CYNTHIA. It wouldn't have worked, Neil—with those people. Don't you know it wouldn't?

NEIL. I think I do.

CYNTHIA. I've been sitting out on a bench in the square, trying to think out what it would mean—what it would do to you.

NEIL. I know. Widgets.

CYNTHIA. That would be worse for you than any amount of poverty.

NEIL. Poverty in our cottage.

CYNTHIA. Did you think of a cottage, too?

NEIL. Of course—I lived there.

CYNTHIA. We could manage. I know quite a lot about raising chickens.

NEIL [*reminiscently*]. A little red hen and a little dun cow.

CYNTHIA. Yes, we might have a cow. Have you been thinking about it, too? [*Rises.*]

NEIL. Well—let's say dreaming. [*He rises and goes to the desk.*] It was terrible, Cynthia—do you know, I dreamed I was married to *her*?

CYNTHIA. To Gladys?

NEIL. When I thought you didn't care, I was hurt and angry. And I dreamed she telephoned——[*Sees the receiver off the hook.*] My God! Did she telephone! Oh, Cynthia, it's real! I *did* do it! I did!

CYNTHIA. Did what?

NEIL. I did ask her to marry me!

CYNTHIA. Neil! You didn't! And she—accepted you?

NEIL. Yes.

CYNTHIA. Oh, Neil.

[*A knock at the door. JERRY puts his head in. He wears a uniform somewhat like the one that accompanied him through the dream.*]

JERRY. It's me, Jerry. I've been ringing your phone for the last five minutes. Yeh, I thought so—you left it off the hook again. [*NEIL replaces the receiver.*] The young lady that came before was waiting, so I brought her right up.

GLADYS [*in the doorway*]. It's me, Neil—may I come in? [*Enters.*] Oh, hello again. Miss Mason!

CYNTHIA. I—I forgot my tea things. [*Half choking, she takes up her tray of tea things.*]

GLADYS. Well, here we are. Isn't it exciting! We're engaged.

NEIL. Yes.

GLADYS. Did you have a good nap?

NEIL. Yes, thank you.

GLADYS [*obviously something on her mind*]. Do you love me a lot, Neil? Enough to do me a great big favor?

NEIL. What?

GLADYS. It's a big one, and maybe you won't want to do it.

NEIL. What is it?

GLADYS. Well, it's this way. Coming back from the dress-maker's I met Walter Craig. I told you about him, didn't I? He's a boy that sort of used to like me.

NEIL. Oh, yes.

GLADYS. Now, mind you, Neil, you can say "No" to this if you want to, but—he said, "What are you doing tonight?" Now, you won't be angry, Neil?

NEIL. No, no.

GLADYS. Well, then he said he didn't know any other girl in New York, and would I sort of play around with him this week. So all I wondered was—well—you know how a fellow is—if he thinks a girl's engaged, why, he won't come near her at all. Now mind, you don't have to do it—and I won't be a bit hurt if you don't, but what I thought was—if we could start being engaged, say, a week from today—you wouldn't mind, would you, Neil? Of course, next week, after we *are* engaged, we'll just go everywhere together.

NEIL. I see.

GLADYS. I know a dozen people, pretty near, that'll give big parties for us. It's an awful lot of fun, being engaged.

NEIL. Is it? I'm afraid I wouldn't fit in with that sort of thing.

GLADYS. Why, half the fun of being engaged is—well——

NEIL. Gladys, just what is your idea of being engaged?

GLADYS. Why—I've just been telling you. [NEIL *smiles.*]
What's the matter?

NEIL. Well, it's just that your idea of an engagement is different from mine.

GLADYS. What is yours?

NEIL. I think I'd want to be somewhere alone, just the two of us, where we could talk.

GLADYS. Talk about what?

NEIL [*with a meaning look*]. I don't know.

GLADYS. You don't mean you'd *always* be like that, do you? I mean, when you're married?

NEIL. I might.

GLADYS. Well, where would I come in? Do you mean you'd expect *me* to sit around *every* evening and—just talk? I did think you'd be willing to—play around the way other people do.

NEIL. I see.

GLADYS. But, of course, if you wouldn't—well—why—there doesn't seem to be much sense in our being engaged, does there?

NEIL. It's to be just as you say, Gladys.

GLADYS. Well, I don't think we're exactly suited to each other—if you think it over. Honestly, I don't. Do you?

NEIL. No, Gladys.

GLADYS. I noticed the difference the minute I saw Walter again! I can kind of let myself go with Walter. You're sure you don't think I'm a quitter?

NEIL. I think you're all right.

GLADYS. And we'll still be friends, won't we? I've always thought you were nice, Neil. [*She gives a sigh.*] It's a sort of a relief, isn't it?

NEIL. Yes, it is—rather.

GLADYS. Well, goodbye. I've got to go because I left Walter downstairs. [*She departs.*]

NEIL. Oh! [*Laughs. Starts to call out.*] Cyn— [*Looks across the hall, crosses to the piano and begins to play the music of the pantomime.*]

[*After a moment CYNTHIA comes slowly into the room.*]

CYNTHIA [*hesitatingly*]. Want me, Neil?

NEIL. Do I want you? [*He continues playing as he hears her approaching.*]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Aeschylus was born at Athens in 525 B.C. He is regarded as the father of Greek tragedy, and he took first prize in contests no less than thirteen times. He wrote about ninety plays, of which the following are extant: *The Suppliants* (c. 490 B.C.), *The Persians* (472 B.C.), *The Seven Against Thebes* (477 B.C.), *Prometheus Bound* (c. 470 B.C.), and *The Oresteia*, a trilogy comprised of *Agamemnon*, *The Libation Pourers* (*Choephoroi*), and *The Benign Ones* (*Eumenides*), (458 B.C.). He died in 456 B.C. at Gela, Sicily.

Sophocles was born at Colonus in 497 B.C. He comes at the height of the Greek civilization and is the most classic of the tragic writers. He is credited with having written over 110 plays and with winning eighteen victories at the City Dionysia and several minor ones elsewhere. The following plays are extant: *Antigone* (441 B.C.), *Ajax*, *The Maidens of Trachis*, *Electra*, *Philoctetes* (409 B.C.), *Oedipus, the King*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. He died in 406 B.C. at Athens.

Euripides was born at Salamis in 480 B.C. He was the most human of the three great Greek tragic dramatists. Over ninety plays are attributed to him, and the prize was accorded his work five times. Eight of his plays were read in the schools and are accompanied by commentaries of the old scholars. The following plays are extant: *Alcestis* (438 B.C.), *Medea* (431 B.C.), *The Children of Hercules* (430 B.C.), *Hippolytus* (428 B.C.), *Hecuba* (c. 425 B.C.), *The Suppliants*, *Andromache* (419 B.C.), *The Mad Hercules*, *The Trojan Women* (415 B.C.), *Electra* (413 B.C.), *Helena* (412 B.C.), *Ion*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Orestes* (408 B.C.), *The Phoenician Women* (407 B.C.), *The Bacchantes*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *Cyclops*. Euripides died in 406 B.C. in Macedonia.

Jean Racine was born at La Ferté-Milon, France, in 1639. He is one of the two great neo-classic French writers. His first two plays, *Thébaïde* (1664) and *Alexandre* (1665), were produced by Molière's company. Then came *Andromache* (1667), *Bérénice* (1670), *Britannicus* (1669), *Bejazyet* (1672), *Mithridates* (1673), *Iphigenia* (1674), and his greatest success, *Phaedra* (1677). He retired from the stage to write history, but in 1689 he turned out a play called *Esther*, and another in 1691 called *Athalie*, both for the pupils of Saint Cyr, a girl's school under the patronage of Madame de Maintenon. He died in 1699.

John Millington Synge was born at Rathfarnham, County Dublin, Ireland, in 1871. He traveled extensively in Europe and for several years lived in Paris where he attempted to imitate Racine, Corneille, and the other neo-classic writers. Yeats persuaded him to return to Ireland. He is unquestionably the greatest of the Irish playwrights. His first two plays, *In the Shadow of the Glen* (1903) and *Riders to the Sea* (1904), established his reputation. He followed them with *The Well of the Saints* (1905), *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907), *The Tinker's Wedding* (pub. 1907), and *Deidre of the Sorrows* (produced 1910, after his death). He died in 1909.

Molière (Jean Baptiste Poquelin) was born at Paris in 1622. He received training as actor, manager, and playwright, and for many years before settling in Paris he toured the provinces, perfecting his art. His principal plays are as follows: *The Ridiculous Young Ladies* (1659), *Sganarelle* (1660), *The School for Husbands* (1661), *The School for Wives* (1662), *Don Juan* (1665), *Tartuffe* (two versions—1664 and 1667), *The Misanthrope* (1666), *The Physician in Spite of Himself* (1666), *The Miser* (1668), *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1669), *The Would-be Gentleman* (1670), *The Deceits of Scapin* (1671), *The Learned Ladies* (1672), and *The Hypochondriac* (1673). He died in 1673.

William Congreve was born in Ireland in 1670, and was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He is considered the most brilliant of the Restoration writers. His first play, *The Old Bachelor* (1693), was written when he was only twenty-three years of age. He received the patronage of Dryden and other established men and produced *The Double Dealer* in the same year (1693). *Love for Love*, one of his two best plays, came in 1695, and *The Mourning Bride*, his only tragedy, in 1697. *The Way of the World*, often regarded as superior to *Love for Love* in dialogue, though it is inferior in plotting, was produced in 1700. Its unpopularity, owing to the change in public taste, caused Congreve to stop writing for the stage. He died in 1729.

Samuel Nathaniel Behrman was born at Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1893. He is a university man and has been Assistant Literary Editor on *The New York Times*. He contributed stories and articles to several of the popular magazines and wrote one-act plays for a number of theatrical stars. His long plays are *The Man Who Forgot* (written in collaboration with Owen Davis, 1926), *Love is Like That* (1926), *The Second Man* (1927), and *Serena Blandish* (1928).

Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born at Dublin in 1854. He became noted as a poet, an essayist, a lecturer, and a critic, as well as a playwright. He is one of the most gifted writers of dialogue in the history of the English stage. Outside of a cheap melodrama and a poor attempt at tragedy entitled *The Duchess of Padua*, his plays may be called masterpieces. His comedies are *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892), *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), and *An Ideal Husband* (1895). In addition to these are a romantic drama, *Salomé* (1893), and what is probably the most perfect farce in the English language, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). He died at Paris in 1900.

William Archer was born at Perth, Scotland, in 1856, and was educated at Edinburgh University. He became a news-

paper writer and later a dramatic critic. He is noted, by his translations and his editing, for being largely instrumental in introducing Ibsen into England. Among his critical works are *English Dramatists of Today* (1882), *Masks or Faces?* (1888), five volumes of critical notices reprinted, *The Theatrical World* (1893-1897), *America Today, Observations and Reflections* (1900), *Poets of the Younger Generation* (1901), *Real Conversations* (1904), *A National Theatre Scheme and Estimate* (with Granville-Barker, 1907), *Play-Making* (1912), and *God and Mr. Wells* (1917). Shortly before his death he contributed his one play, a melodrama entitled *The Green Goddess* (1920), which is about the best bit of technical writing for a piece of that kind in existence. He died in 1924.

Victor Hugo was born at Besançon, France, in 1802. He wrote verse and stories at a very early age and became one of the leading romanticists. *Cromwell*, a poor drama, was published in 1827; it contains a preface advocating his dramatic doctrines. An earlier drama, *Inez de Castro*, written when Hugo was sixteen years of age, employs all the romantic trappings that later appear in *Hernani*. *Hernani* (1830) achieved the victory of romanticism over classicism. Other important plays of Hugo are *Marion de Lorme* (1828), *The King Enjoys Himself* (1831), *Ruy Blas* (1838), and *The Burgraves* (1843). Hugo's greatest artistic achievement is, of course, in the novel. His *Notre Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables* are world famous. He died in 1885.

Louis N. Parker was born at Calvados, France, in 1852. He was for about twenty years Director of Music at Sherborne School, Dorset, where he composed a number of cantatas and other musical pieces. He has written and produced several pageants, and has translated many of the plays of Victorien Sardou. His own plays are generally historical or romantic. The following are significant: *Beauty and the Burge* (1910), *Disraeli* (1911), *Drake* (1912), *The Man in the Street* (1912), *Joseph and His Brethern* (1913), *Pomander Walk* (1915), *A Minuet* (1915), *Mavourneen* (1916).

Henrik Ibsen was born at Skien, Norway, in 1828. In 1851 he was affiliated with a theatre at Bergen and later with one at Christiania. His early plays are mostly poetic and are not his best work. In 1864 he settled in Rome where he wrote *Brand* (1866) and *Peer Gynt* (1867). He then turned his attention to social dramas in prose and brought out *Pillars of Society* in 1877. This was followed by *A Doll's House* (1879), *Ghosts* (1881), *An Enemy of the People* (1882), *The Wild Duck* (1884), *Rosmersholm* (1886), *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), *Hedda Gabler* (1890), *The Master Builder* (1892), *Little Eyolf* (1894), *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896), and *When We Dead Awaken* (1899). He is probably the most influential, if not the most important, of all modern dramatists. He died in 1906.

Anton Tchekhoff was born at Taganrog, Russia, in 1860. He attended the university at Moscow and received an M.D. in 1884. He is noted as a writer of both short stories and plays. Toward the end of his career he became affiliated with the Moscow Art Players who produced his best work. His plays are: *The Swan Song* (1889), *The Proposal* (1889), *Ivanoff* (1889), *The Boor* (1890), *The Sea Gull* (1896), *The Tragedian in Spite of Himself* (1899), *The Three Sisters* (1901), *Uncle Vanya* (1902), and *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). He died in 1904.

Charles John Huffham Dickens was born at Portsea, England, in 1812. He is noted for his novels and is not a playwright. A number of his stories, however, have been adapted for the stage, among them being *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *The Cricket on the Hearth*. The last was adapted by Albert Smith in 1858 and was played in this country by Joseph Jefferson. Dickens is noted for his superb characterization, his sympathy with the lower classes, and his warmth of sentiment (often running into sentimentality). He exerted a strong influence upon Victorian literature. He died in 1870.

August Strindberg was born at Stockholm, Sweden, in 1849. He wrote a large number of works including essays, plays, and novels. His plays are in two general groups: those dealing with fantasy, such as *Swanwhite*, and those written in bitter realism or "naturalism." His principal translated plays are: *The Father* (1887), *Miss Julia* (1888), *Comrades* (1888), *Creditors* (1890), *Pariah* (1890), *Simoom* (1890), *The Stronger* (1890), *Debit and Credit* (1893), *Mother-Love* (1893), *Facing Death* (1893), *The Link* (1897), *Playing with Fire* (1897), *There are Crimes and Crimes* (1899), *Easter* (1891), *The Dance of Death* (I and II, 1901), *Swanwhite* (1902), *The Dream Play* (1902), and *Storm* (1907). He died in 1912.

Maurice Maeterlinck was born at Brussels, Belgium, in 1862. He is noted as a naturalist, a poet, and a philosopher, as well as a dramatist. His plays fall into two groups: those treated in a symbolic fashion, such as *Pélléas and Mélisande*, and those done in more conventional style, such as *Monna Vanna*. His greatest contribution is considered to be in his symbolical work. His chief plays are *The Princess Maleine* (1889), *The Blind* (1890), *The Intruder* (1890), *The Seven Princesses* (1891), *Pélléas and Mélisande* (1892), *Alladine and Palomides* (1894), *The Interior* (1894), *The Death of Tintagiles* (1894), *Annabella* (1895), *Aglavaine and Sélysette* (1894), *Ariane and Blue-Beard* (1901), *Sister Beatrice* (1901), *Monna Vanna* (1902), *Joyzelle* (1903), *The Blue Bird* (1908), and *Marie Madeleine* (1910).

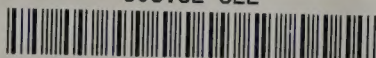
George S. Kaufman was born at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1889. He is known as a newspaper man and a playwright. He conducted a daily humorous column on the *Washington Times* and another on the *New York Evening Mail*. Eventually he joined the dramatic staffs of the *New York Tribune* and the *New York Times*. He wrote a play called *The Butter and Egg Man* in 1925. Most of his playwriting, however, has been in collaboration. He is co-author of the following: *Someone in the House* (1918), *Jacques Dubal* (1920), *Dulcy*

(1921), *To the Ladies* (1922), *Merton of the Movies* (1922), *Helen of Troy, New York* (musical, 1923), *The Deep Tangled Wildwood* (1923), *Beggar on Horseback* (1924), *Be Yourself* (musical, 1924), *Minick* (1924), and *The Cocoanuts* (musical, 1925).

Marc (Marcus Cook) Connelly was born at McKeesport, Pennsylvania, in 1890. He began as a newspaper man and was a reporter on the *Pittsburgh Sun* and the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. He conducted a humorous column on the *Gazette Times*, and he contributed verse and articles to *Life*, *Everybody's*, and other magazines. He has written lyrics for several musical comedies. As a playwright, he is co-author of *Dulcy* (1921), *To the Ladies* (1922), *Merton of the Movies* (1922), *Helen of Troy, New York* (musical, 1923), and *Beggar on Horseback* (1924).

Date Due

MAR 28 '52	MAY 14 '57	FEB 8 '61	JE 3 '66
APR 8 '52	OCT 9 '57	MAR 15 '61	AP 18 '68
DEC 1 - '52	MAR 12 '58	APR 24 '61	MY 6 '68
FEB 20 '54	MAR 26 '58	MAY 10 '61	MY 20 '68
OCT 20 '54	MAY 1 '58	MAY 24 '61	AP 14 '69
OCT 29 '54	MAY 15 '58	MAY 7 '61	FE 18 '70
	APR 22 '59	CT 13 '61	MR 18 '70
FEB 16 '55	MAY 15 '59	MAR 14 '62	NO 17 '70
MAR 29 '55	AUG 7 - '59	MAR 28 '62	OC 23 '72
MAY 23 '55	DEC 18 '59	APR 18 '62	FE 18 '78
MAR 13 '56	MAR 3 '60	MAY 19 '62	
MAY 29 '56	MAR 26 '60	MAY 8 '63	
AUG 11 '56	APR 25 '60	RESERVE	
JUL 28 '56	MAY 10 '60	MY 28 '64	
OCT 1 '56	OCT 6 - '60	AP 26 '65	
NOV 27 '56	NOV 8 '60	DE 16 '65	
JAN 22 '57	DEC 4 '60	JA 28 '66	
MAR 1 - '57	DEC 21 '60	MY 20 '66	
®			



3 1927 00040900 0

808.82

4

C22

Carpenter, B., comp.
A book of dramas

DATE	ISSUED TO
18 '68	<i>[Signature]</i>

808.82

C22

